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On the Question of Feudalism, Absolutism, and the Bourgeois Revolution

Teshale Tibebu

That, by the time the “bourgeois revolutions” came, feudalism had died out long ago in western Europe is clearly discerned in Engels’s “manifesto.” Comparing the “civilized,” bourgeois western Europe with its “barbaric,” feudal Eastern counterpart, Engels wrote:

When Italy, France, England, Belgium, North and West Germany, one after another extricated themselves of feudal barbarism *during the latter part of the Middle Ages*, when industry was developing, trade expanding, the towns thriving and the burghers acquired political importance, one part of Germany lagged behind West European development. *Bourgeois civilization followed the sea coasts and the course of the big rivers.* The inland, especially the barren and impassable mountainous regions, remained the seat of barbarism and of feudalism. This barbarism was especially concentrated in the South German and South Slav inland areas. Protected by the Alps from Italian civilization and by the mountains of Bohemia and Moravia from that of North Germany, these inland countries had the additional good fortune of being the basin of *the only reactionary river in Europe. The Danube*, far from linking them with civilization, brought them into contact with a much more vigorous barbarism (1976: 530–33; emphasis added).

Leaving the nineteenth-century language of civilization versus barbarism aside, Engels’s comparison of the *bourgeois* West with that of its

feudal eastern counterpart in Europe has been a standard version of Marxist historiography. If the Danube was a “reactionary river” the Thames and Seine were not?¹ The Rhine and Elbe had a split personality, their face facing west towards bourgeois civilization, and their back pointing east towards feudal “barbarism.” Hence the historical expression — “east of the Elbe,” as in the discussion of the so-called second serfdom.

Metternich’s Austria is depicted as a country where “feudalism, patriarchalism and faint-hearted philistinism [is] defended by the paternal rod . . .” (Engels, 1977: VII, 530).² Quite clearly, the Absolutist states of the West are classified as bourgeois and “civilized,” as opposed to the House of the Hapsburgs which is seen as feudal. The long extension of *feudal* Absolutism, all the way from Spain to Russia, and from the “latter parts of the Middle Ages,” up to the “bourgeois revolutions” of the 1640’s, 1789, and 1848, is contrary to Engels’s observation cited earlier.

What, then, is feudalism?

“The history of ‘feudalism’ begins, not with what happened in the European Middle Ages, but with what was believed to have happened in the Middle Ages by the political commentators of a later period,” so said John Critchley (1978: 56).

The Ancien Regime was created by the French Revolution. It was what the revolutionaries thought they were destroying in and after 1789. Nobody before that momentous year thought of themselves as living under something called the Ancien Regime. *Ancien* means not so much “old” as “former”; and there can be no former regime until there is a new one (1986: 1).

So added William Doyle. Telling observations of the enigma of language, its *post festum* character, and, of course, its bias. The greatest difficulty in understanding feudalism is this: that *feudalism was conceptualized by its enemies*, and that this conceptualization took place long after feudalism itself had ceased to be dominant. Feudal society itself did not perceive and/or call itself feudal, so say the experts.³ It was the Enlightenment, i.e., the rising bourgeoisie, that coined the phrase “feudalism,” of course, with the explicit purpose of making it reactionary. The word “feudal” is almost nothing more than a synonym for the word “bad” (Hoyt, 1961: 1). It is like an atheist writing about religion.

Perhaps the best analogy is in the political use of the word “fascist” by the “left” almost everywhere. Reagan, Bukharin, Khrushchev-Brezhnev, the Derg, etc. — the “left” in the U.S., Stalin, Maoists, the “left” in Ethiopia, respectively — saw fascism in their adversary. If one shies away from calling these fascists one will have to face the “left’s” version of excommunication — the Purge. Fascism lost any of its social structural relations and became the full name for the worst grade on the roster of the political school — F. In the same way the Enlightenment used the terms “feudal” and “feudalism” for *polemical* and political reasons, the Marxists of the twentieth century use the terms “fascist” and “fascism.” Sluggishness, big landed property, political and social “backwardness,” aristocratic lifestyles, inefficient bureaucracy, etc., have been attributed either to feudalism, or to feudal hangovers from the past. Some went to the extent of seeing in Nazism a feudal survival strategy armed with the vengeance of the panzers. Since “normal” capitalism is depicted as having the “superstructure” of parliamentary, liberal democracy, the phenomenon of Nazism could only be due to Germany’s failed “bourgeois revolution” of the nineteenth century, which in turn was due to strong feudal residues. In all these, Marxists and liberals have been comrades-in-theory.

The Enlightenment view of feudalism, which is also shared by many Marxists, since the Enlightenment was the ideology of the progressive, revolutionary, *rising* bourgeoisie, is still dominant in many circles. Since feudal society did not know itself by that term, we cannot avoid *imposing* our latter-day conception of the term upon the society we call feudal. Moreover, when we do so, we already have a *non-feudal society* in the background *against which the supposed feudalism is identified*, i.e., feudalism has been understood residually and in comparison with capitalism. In this, both Adam Smith and Karl Marx have similar, residual views of feudalism.⁴ The immense problems this methodology poses go without saying.

Hence, with the residual and comparative nature of the study of feudalism in mind, let us see some of the ways in which “feudal society” has been conceptualized.

In the writings of Marx and Engels, feudalism, or the feudal social formation, has been conceptualized within the framework of “pre-capitalist” formations, in opposition to and in contrast with capitalism.

Among other things, Marx and Engels’ conception of feudal social

formation is based on a “comparison” between *estates* under feudalism and *classes* under capitalism.

The distinctions among class, estate, status, and order are notoriously difficult to analyze rigorously. In the *Communist Manifesto*, we find a highly simplified picture of class and class struggle, only to be contradicted in the following paragraph. The famous opening statement: “The history of all hitherto-existing society is the history of class struggle” is supposedly based on historical evidences of class struggles among

Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master [“that is, a full member of a guild, a master within, not a head of a guild” — Engels’ footnote] and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed [which does not necessarily mean exploiter and exploited. Cf. the depiction of the bourgeoisie as an “oppressed class under the sway of the feudal nobility”], stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an interrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes (Marx & Engels, 1968: 35–36).

Just in the next paragraph, we read this:

In the earlier epochs of history [“pre-capitalist”], we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank. In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate gradations (Marx & Engels, 1968: 36).

What started out as a list of various gradations of *orders* ended up as that of *classes*. The lack of analytic precision is obvious. Marx and Engels strongly argued that the term “class” should be applied *only* to capitalism since, “By the mere fact that it is a *class* and no longer an *estate*, the bourgeoisie is forced to organize itself no longer locally [as was the case under feudalism], but nationally, and to give a general form to its mean average interest” (Marx & Engels, 1976: 90; emphasis added). So is it with the proletariat: “Though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first

a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie" (Marx & Engels, 1968: 45).

What makes the bourgeoisie and the proletariat "class," as opposed to "estate," is not only organization at a national level, but also, and this is even more important, organization on a global scale. The bourgeoisie and the proletariat are *world-classes*, besides being *national-classes*.⁵ "Pre-capitalist" "classes" were neither national nor world "classes." And yet the history of all hitherto-existing society is the history of *class* struggles!

Hal Draper, in his detailed textual analysis of the *Manifesto*, shows how the four *classes* of the opening statements of the *Manifesto* "are by no means coordinate, and reflect popular historical terminology. In particular, they reflect juridical social orders (social estates, *Stände*) rather than social classes properly so called" (Draper, 1984: 81). Draper writes further about the German word, *Stand*:

Though often translatable as "class" it means, more exactly, a social stratum organized in a juridical relationship fixed by the state or tradition, not simply by economics. . . .

Stand was also a general word for "rank", "order", "position" (1984: 82).

Discussing the absolute monarchies of Europe, Marx wrote:

Modern histories have demonstrated that *absolute monarchy* appears in those transitional periods when the old *feudal estates* [emphasis added] are in decline and the *medieval estate of burghers* [emphasis added] is evolving into the modern *bourgeois class* [emphasis added], without one of the contending parties having as yet finally disposed of the other (1976: VI, 326).

The feudal and burghers' *estates* were replaced by the bourgeois *class*. Again, a distinction is made between estate and class. As to the *serfs*, they were an estate like the burghers and the feudal nobility. The *peasants* are different. The "sack of potatoes" imagery of the *Eighteenth Brumaire* was meant to be a theory of rejection of peasants as a *class*, and yet they are not an *estate* either.

Insofar as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests

and their culture from those of the other classes, and put them in hostile opposition to the latter, they form a class. [Accordingly, peasants form a class as they are opposed to the capitalist class.] Insofar as there is merely a local interconnection among these small-holding peasants, and the identity of their interests begets no community, no national bond and no political organization among them [all of which were the conditions of existence of the French peasants in the mid-nineteenth century discussed in the immediately preceding two sentences], they do not form a class.

They are consequently incapable of enforcing their class [*sic!*] interests in their own name, whether through parliament or through a convention. They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented. Their representative must at the same time appear as their master, as an authority over them, as an unlimited governmental power that protects them against the other classes and sends them rain and sunshine from above. The political influence of the small-holding peasants, therefore, finds its final expression in the executive power subordinating society to itself (Marx, 1968b: 171–72).

Classes become classes in-and-through *relations* of opposition to each other. Accordingly, peasants do form a *class* in and through relations of oppositional interests with landlords, capitalists, the “state,” etc. Classes become classes through political *self-representation* of their class interests. Accordingly, since peasants cannot *represent themselves politically*, since they must be represented by other than themselves, since their representatives are also their masters “a la Bonapartism,” they do not form a class. Oppositional *relations* are at loggerheads with political representation. Contemporary Marxists extend Marx’s theory of Bonapartism to Fascism and Nazism, replacing Marx’s peasants with the petty bourgeoisie whose Bonaparte became Hitler.

Three paragraphs later, Marx made a qualification:

But let there be no misunderstanding. The Bonaparte dynasty represents not the revolutionary, but the conservative, peasant; not the peasant that strikes out beyond the condition of his social existence, the small holding, but rather the peasant who

wants to consolidate this holding; not the countryfolk who, linked up with the towns, want to overthrow the old order through their own energies but on the contrary those who, in stupefied seclusion within this old order, want to see themselves and their smallholdings saved and favoured by the ghost of the empire. It represents not the enlightenment, but the superstition of the peasant; not his judgment, but his prejudice; not his future, but his past; not his modern Cevennes, but his modern Vendée (Marx, 1968b: 172–73).

Enlightenment versus superstition; judgment versus prejudice; future versus past; modern revolution versus modern counter-revolution—a double-split personality of the French peasantry. The good side of the split was not for Bonapartism; the bad side was.

A few pages earlier, Bonapartism is discussed as the alternative sought by the French bourgeoisie to that of parliamentary democracy in the need to restore “order” in the aftermath of the 1848 revolution.

Thus [wrote Marx], by not stigmatizing as “*socialistic*” what it had previously extolled as “liberal,” the bourgeoisie confesses that its own interests dictate that it should be delivered from the danger of its *own rule*; that, in order to restore tranquility in the country, its bourgeois parliament must, first of all, be laid to rest; that, in order to preserve its social power intact, its political power must be broken; that the individual bourgeois can continue to exploit the other classes and to enjoy undisturbed property, family, religion and order only on condition that their class be condemned along with the other classes to similar political nullity; that, in order to save its purse, it must forfeit the crown, and the sword that is to safeguard it must at the same time be hung over its own head as a sword of Damocles (Marx, 1968b: 132).

Here we have a different story. The bourgeoisie preferred the Bonapartist dictatorship to that of the “disorder” of their “own” parliamentary democracy. Accordingly, Bonapartism appears to be the political guardian of the bourgeoisie, but the result is the latter giving up their right to democracy and being “ruled” under the rifle butt. Marx’s argument about Bonapartism is that “it” represents the conser-

vative French peasantry who do not form a class, and yet Bonapartism is a means of defense of the class interests of the bourgeoisie, a class which, by the way, can represent itself since it is a *class*, while the peasants are not. If Bonapartism represents conservative peasants, it is due to the fact that peasants cannot represent themselves. If Bonapartism is primarily a means for the defense of the interests of the bourgeoisie, it is because the bourgeoisie do not want to represent their own interests by themselves, *although they can*; they want the military to rule them instead and on their behalf. Hence, Bonapartism represents those who cannot represent themselves, *and* those who can represent themselves, but who do not want to do so.

Our discussion of the theory of class in the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, perhaps Marx's best historical work—Engels called it “a work of genius”—cannot be comprehensive without looking at Marx's preface to the second edition. Lashing out against those whose “superficial historical analogy” saw in Bonapartism a second edition of the Caesarism of classical antiquity, Marx cancelled one of the pairs of class struggles discussed in the opening of the *Manifesto*.

I hope that my work will contribute towards elimination of the school-taught phrase now current, particularly in Germany, of so-called *Caesarism*. In this superficial historical analogy the main point is forgotten, namely that in ancient Rome *the class struggle took place only within a privileged minority, between the free rich and the free poor*, while the great, productive mass of the population, the slaves, formed the purely passive pedestal of these combatants (Marx & Engels, 1968: I, 222; emphasis added).

Hence the very first pair of class struggles mentioned in the *Manifesto*, “Freeman and slave,” is rendered obsolete twenty-one years after the publication of the *Manifesto*! The preface was written on June 23, 1869. One of the best authorities on classical slavery seems to agree with Marx's observations in the preface. He wrote:

I have already indicated that helots revolted, while chattel slaves did not in Greece, precisely because *the helots possessed (not lacked) certain rights and privileges, and demanded more*. Invariably, what are conventionally called “class struggles” in antiquity prove to be conflicts between groups at different points in the spectrum

disputing the distribution of specific rights and privileges. When genuine slaves did finally revolt, three times on a massive scale in Italy and Sicily in the period 140–70 B.C., their concern was with themselves and their status, *not with slavery as an institution*, *not*, simply stated, *to abolish slavery* (Finley, 1985: 68).

To part company with Marx's theory of estates and peasants as class or otherwise, one final note from his *The Class Struggles in France 1848–1850*, written and published two years before the *Eighteenth Brumaire*:

The condition of the French peasants, when the Republic had added new burdens to their old ones, is comprehensible. It can be seen that their exploitation differs only in *form* from the exploitation of the industrial proletariat. The exploiter is the same: *capital*. The individual capitalists exploit the individual peasants through mortgages and usury; the capitalist class exploits the peasant class through the state taxes. The peasant's title to property is the talisman by which capital held him hitherto under its spell, the pretext under which it set him against the industrial proletariat (Marx, 1971b: 221).

Here peasants are treated not only as a *class* opposed to capital, but also their difference from the proletariat is merely "formal."

Theories of class — Marx indeed has that; a *theory of class* — certainly not.

But one issue is of crucial importance to the question of feudalism: *feudalism posits its tillers as estate, not as class*, while under capitalism the former serf estate becomes peasants, whose *class* identity has been described by Marx rather inconsistently. And yet, Marx is consistent on the issue that *peasants are exploited by capital*. And this, of course, means that they are not under feudal relations of production.

The thesis that capitalism is world-historical, as opposed to feudalism, which is local, is central to Marx and Engels' theory of feudalism. Under capitalism the

universal development of productive forces is a *universal* intercourse between men [and women] established, which on the one side produces in *all* nations simultaneously the phenomenon of the "propertyless" mass (universal competition), making each nation dependent on the revolutions of the others, and finally

puts *world-historical*, empirically universal individuals in place of local ones (Marx & Engels, 1976: V, 49).

The world-historical existence of “men” was not only “in place of local ones,” but also “instead of local” ones (Marx & Engels, 1976: V, 49).

Feudal property, “or estate property” (Marx & Engels, 1976: V, 33), which seems to be identical for Marx and Engels, is the third form of property after the “tribal” and ancient communal and state property, the first and second forms of property respectively (Marx & Engels, 1976: V, 32–33).

Property in the feudal epoch *primarily* consisted on the one hand of landed property with serf labour attached to it, and on the other of the personal labour of the individual who with his small capital commands the labour of journeymen. The organization of both was determined by the restricted conditions of production—the scanty and primitive cultivation of the land, and the craft type of industry (Marx & Engels, 1976: V, 34–35; emphasis added).⁶

The contrast of this localized world with the world-historical civilization of capitalism goes without saying. As to the division of labor:

There was little division of labour in the heyday of feudalism. Each country bore in itself the antithesis of town and country; the division into estates was certainly strongly marked; but apart from the differentiation of princes, nobility, clergy and peasants in the country, and masters, journeymen, apprentices and so on, also the rabble of casual labourers in the towns, there was no important division. In agriculture it was rendered difficult by the strip-system, beside which the cottage industry of the peasants themselves emerged. In industry there was no division of labour in the individual trades and very little between them. The separation of industry and commerce was found already in existence in older towns; in the newer it only developed later, when the towns entered into mutual relations (Marx & Engels, 1976: V, 35).

The term “peasant” used in the above context is a misnomer. The “peasant” under feudalism has hardly anything in common with the

peasant under capitalism save the “same” name.

As to the political “superstructure,” “the grouping of large territories into feudal kingdoms was a necessity for the landed nobility as for the towns. The organization of the ruling class, the nobility, had, therefore, everywhere a monarch at its head” (Marx & Engels, 1976: V, 35).

As to the question of the identification of feudalism with serfdom, Engels wrote in 1882, 35 years after *The German Ideology* was written,

It is certain that serfdom and bondage are not a peculiarly medieval-feudal form, we find them everywhere or nearly everywhere where conquerors *have the land cultivated for them* by the old inhabitants — e.g., very early in Thessaly. This fact has even misled me and many other people about servitude in the Middle Ages; one was much too much inclined to base it simply on conquest, this made everything so neat and easy. . . .

The position of the Christians in Turkey during the height of the old Turkish semi-feudal system was something similar (Engels, 1971: 148).

This seems to contradict the view expressed earlier in *The German Ideology*. However, if serfdom is not peculiarly feudal, it does not follow necessarily that feudalism is not peculiarly serfdom. It is not *serf* status *per se* that defines feudalism, but the *social-relational framework* within which serfdom is encompassed. Feudalism is serfdom within feudal social relations of production, i.e., within the framework of the estates “system.”⁷

Discussing the “class” relations under feudalism, Marx and Engels wrote:

The hierarchical structure of landownership, and the armed bodies of retainers associated with it, gave the nobility power over the serfs. This feudal organisation was, just as much as the ancient communal property, an association against a subjected producing class; but the form of association and the relation to the direct producers were different because of the different conditions of production (Marx & Engels, 1976: V, 34).

The relation between the two sides of feudalism — country and town — was based on antagonism.

This feudal structure of landownership had its counterpart in the *towns* in the shape of corporative property, the feudal organization of trades. Here property consisted chiefly in the labour of each individual. The necessity for associating against the association of the robber-nobility, the need for communal covered markets in an age when the industrialist was at the same time a merchant, the growing competition of the escaped serfs swarming into the rising towns, the feudal structure of the whole country: these combined to bring about the *guilds*. The gradually accumulated small capital of individual craftsmen and their stable numbers, as against the growing population, evolved into the relation of journeyman and apprentice, which brought into being in the towns a hierarchy similar to that in the country (Marx & Engels, 1976: V, 34).

Now we have a clear picture of feudal society in the writings of Marx and Engels: *an estate organization*, as opposed to class organization; *little or no division of labor*, as opposed to worldwide division of labor; *“primitive” conditions of production*, as opposed to modern industry; *the nobility as ruling “class,”* as opposed to the bourgeoisie; *serf-labor*, as opposed to wage-labor; *localism*, as opposed to world-historical universalism; *guilds*, as opposed to competition; *journeyman dominance over apprentice*, as opposed to bourgeois dominance over proletariat; *“estate capital”* (Marx & Engels, 1976: V, 66), as opposed to class capital; *“complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradations of social rank,”* as opposed to simplified class antagonism; *supremacy of country over town*, as opposed to supremacy of town over country; *“fixed, frozen relations,”* as opposed to continuous change; *“idiocy of rural life,”* as opposed to cosmopolitan civilization; *personal servitude based on “natural” superiority/inferiority*, as opposed to the cash-nexus; *divine right*, as opposed to the “divinity” of money; *“heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism,”* as opposed to “the icy water of egotistical calculation”; *“personal worth,”* as opposed to “exchange value”; *“exploitation veiled by religious and political illusions,”* as opposed to “naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.” The list can go on. These are the *essential characteristics of feudal society* we can summarize from the writings of Marx and Engels, mostly from the *Communist Manifesto* and the *German Ideology*. The emphasized words are for feudal society; the

oppositional contrast is for capitalism.

What is striking about Marx and Engels' writings on feudal society is that, unlike their would-be successors, they never tried to *define* feudalism. Instead, they felt content *describing* the fundamental "features" of feudal society. Moreover, they were aware that what they were describing was feudal society *as was found in Europe*. The question of whether there were or *could be* feudal societies *outside* Europe was simply not part of their "problematic."

In terms of methodology, therefore, Marx and Engels' writings on feudal society are similar to that of Marc Bloch's *Feudal Society*. Nevertheless, although we do not find any *definition*, or need to have any definition of feudal society in Marx and Engels' writings, we do have a theory about the fundamental *foundation* of feudal society, the "class" basis of it. In the country, nobility-serf "class" relations are based on landed *estate* property; in the town guildmaster-journeyman "class" relations are based on crafts production and "estate capital" property. These two "locales" of the same *estate relationship* are what property in the feudal epoch was "primarily" composed. And since "the question of every epoch is a question of property," these two aspects of the estate "system" "define" feudal social relationships. Hence the decline and disappearance of "landed property with serf labour attached to it," which was the country-estate, on the one hand, and "the personal labour of the individual who with his small capital commands the labour of journeymen," which was the town-estate, on the other, is the decline and disappearance of feudalism. Only scholars like Dobb and Anderson, in their attempts to be more catholic than the pope, have the fun of extending the rubric of feudalism up until 1640's England and 1789 France.

As opposed to and in contrast with the writings of Marx and Engels, the discussion of feudalism by their fellow-travellers has from the outset been one of *definition* of feudalism.⁸ This *definition* of feudalism, as with other social relations of production, is based on Marx's famous identification of the base/superstructure distinction in the study of social relations of production. The definition is *exclusively assigned to the base*, economic relations, since it is the base that is accorded *universal applicability*, without which it can't become a definition, while the superstructures are assigned variations due to many reasons. Uniformity of base and diversity of superstructures is Marx's basis of social theory, or his "social ontology," as Lukacs preferred to call it. Accordingly, he wrote:

The specific economic form, in which unpaid surplus-labour is pumped out of direct producers, determines the relationship of rulers and ruled, as it grows directly out of production itself and, in turn, reacts upon it as a determining element. Upon this, however, is founded the entire formation of the economic community which grows up out of the production relations themselves, thereby its specific political form. It is always the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producers . . . which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure, and with it the political form of the relation of sovereignty and dependence, in short, the corresponding specific form of the state. This does not prevent the same economic basis—the same from the standpoint of its main conditions—due to innumerable different empirical circumstances, natural environment, racial relations, external historical influences, etc., from showing infinite variations and gradations in appearance, which can be ascertained only by analyzing of the empirically given circumstances (Marx, 1977: III, 791–92).

Based on this Marxian Imperative in the study of social relations of production, Maurice Dobb *defined* feudalism as:

an obligation laid on the producer by force and independently of his own volition to fulfill certain economic demands of an overlord, whether these demands take the form of services to be performed or of dues to be paid in money or in kind (Dobb, 1975: 35–36).

Dobb focused his definition exclusively on the mechanism of how “unpaid surplus labor is pumped out of the direct producers” to the exclusion of other superstructural elements. He said that the emphasis of the definition should be

not in the juridical relation between vassal and sovereign, nor in the relation between production and the destination of the product, but in the *relation* between the direct producer . . . and his immediate superior or overlord and the social-economic content of the obligation which connects them (Dobb, 1975: 35–36).

Rodney Hilton saw feudalism as:

a system of economic and social relationships based on the legalized and institutionalized claim of a ruling group to a substantial part of the surplus of peasant production. The members of the ruling group usually appear as landowners, though the concept of land ownership is by no means precise, for it often appears as the ownership of rights over the working occupiers of the land, rather than of ownership of the land itself. Since . . . the ruling group was not economically necessary to peasants, who already effectively possessed their own means of subsistence (contrasted, for instance, with property-less wage workers), the element of coercion in the transfer of the peasant surplus to the lord was quite open. It was guaranteed by the possession by the lords of military force—that armed cavalry which was associated with feudal institutions in the narrower sense (Hilton, 1974: 71).

Elsewhere he expounded the definition further:

The essence of the feudal mode of production in the Marxist sense is the exploitative relationship between landowners and subordinated peasants, in which the surplus beyond subsistence of the latter, whether in direct labour or in rent in kind or in money, is transferred under coercive sanction to the former (Hilton, 1978: 30).

Dobb, Hilton, and Takahashi, to mention but a few, hence *focused* on *economic reactions* between the direct producers and the appropriators of “surplus” in their “definition” of feudalism. Accordingly, neither legal and juridical relations, nor the relations among the various layers of the feudal hierarchy, e.g., lord versus vassal, was of critical importance. Feudalism is a system wherein

economic status and authority were associated with land-tenure, and the direct producer (who was himself the holder of some land) was under obligation based on law or customary right to devote a certain quota of his labour or his produce to the benefit of his feudal superior. Regarded in this way, as a system of socio-economic relations, it is almost identical with what we

generally mean by serfdom; provided that we do not confine the latter to the performance of direct labour services (on the lord's estate or in his household), but include in it the provision of tribute or feudal rent in produce or even in a money-form (Dobb, 1967: 2).

The discussion on feudal society in scholarly circles that do not identify themselves as Marxist have four basic ingredients to their argument: (1) description, instead of definition, as methodological guide; (2) focus on intra-“class” relations among the different layers of the feudal lord “class,” instead of inter-“class” relations between the direct producers and appropriators of surplus; (3) focus on the details of the work organizations on the fief, royal demenses, etc.; and (4) focus on the military aspects of the feudal relationships. Ironically enough, the Marxists have almost totally “forgotten” the need for discussing these four aspects, despite the detailed examination Marx and Engels undertook on these issues.⁹ The most important silence of many Marxist authors on feudalism is on the question of the division of labor and the division and hierarchy of distribution of power in the feudal pyramid.

The most well-known description of feudal society, from full of immense details of everyday life to grand “generalization,” is Marc Bloch's *Feudal Society*. In this work, which M. M. Postan said is “the standard international treatise of feudalism” (1961: xi), Bloch identified the “fundamental features of European feudalism” (1961: 446) as follows:

A subject peasantry; widespread use of the service tenement (i.e., the fief) instead of a salary, which was out of the question; the supremacy of a class of specialized warriors; ties of obedience and protection which bind man to man and, within the warrior class, assume the distinctive form called vassalage; fragmentation of authority—leading inevitably to disorder; and, in the midst of all this, the survival of other forms of association, family and State, of which the latter, during the second feudal age, was to acquire renewed strength—then seem to be the *fundamental features* of European feudalism (1961: 446; emphasis added).

That Bloch begins his identification of feudalism with “a subject peasantry” is not haphazard. It seems that he takes a “subject peasan-

try” to be crucial for the rest of the “fundamental features” of feudal society. “If he does not deal with a subject peasantry in greater detail in the main body of this book this is merely because he has already done so in the *Caractères Originaux*,” commented Postan (1961: xv).

Like all the phenomena revealed by that science of eternal change which is history, the social structure thus characterized certainly bore the peculiar stamp of an age and an environment. Yet just as the matrilineal or agnatic clan or even certain types of economic enterprise are found in much the same forms in very different societies, it is by no means impossible that societies different from our own should have passed through a phase closely resembling that which has just been defined. If so it is legitimate to call them feudal during that phase (Bloch, 1961: 446).

Marc Bloch’s identification of the “fundamental features of European feudalism” is analytic, not synthetic. He enumerates the features, but not the *relations* among the features. However, if we read the whole book and his other writings, like *French Rural History*, we can see how he discusses the relations among the “features.” What is obvious from the identification of the “fundamental features of European feudalism” is that Bloch was not giving a *definition*, but rather a description by isolating the fundamentals and leaving out the details which he discussed elsewhere in the book. It also means that he was dealing with *European* feudalism, and not any others, whose possible existence he did not rule out at all, but left it to be the concern of other scholars.

Georges Duby began his *The Three Orders* with a quotation from Charles Loyseau:

Some are devoted particularly to the service of God; others to the preservation of the State by arms; still others to the task of feeding and maintaining it by peaceful means. These are our three orders or estates general of France, the Clergy, the Nobility, and the Third Estate (1980: 1).

Commenting on the arguments of Georges Dumézil’s study of the trifunctionality of Indo-Aryan civilizations, he said:

In countless texts patiently collected everywhere from the Indies to Iceland and Ireland, three functions are found: the first, in the name of heaven to lay down the rules, the law that

institutes order; the second, brutally, violently, to enforce obedience; the third, finally, of fecundity, health, plenty, pleasure, to guide the “peaceful labors” discussed by Charles Loyseau to achievement of their ends; between these three functions and this same Loyseau’s three “orders,” M. de Torquat’s three “courses,” and the priests, warriors, and peasants of the bishops of Cambrai and Laon, the relationship is clear. So clear that there is no reason to make a point of it, other than to clarify the outlines of the investigation whose results this book will set down (Duby, 1980: 5–6).

This trifunctionality of those who fight, those who pray, and those who till the land and distribute the goods is seen as *functional* division rather than class, although classes do have “functions” too. Plato’s trifunctional division of labor among the Philosopher Kings, warriors, and laborers in his *Republic* is quite fitting to the idea of an “Indo-Aryan civilization” based on trifunctionality. However, the specific quality of the social relations of production peculiar to feudalism will be lost in the midst of Indo-Aryan trifunctionality.

R. Allen Brown, among others, saw feudalism in terms of castles and knighthood.

Feudal society . . . is a society dominated by a secular ruling class of knights, at one and the same time forming both a social and a military elite, bound to each other, in a hierarchy culminating in the prince, by vassalic commendation, and holding their lands . . . by knight service as fiefs. Such a society is also distinguished by that peculiar type . . . of fortification which we, and they, call the castle, combining the two roles of personal residence and fortress both private and public. To such a society, but to no other, the adjective feudal may properly and meaningfully be applied (1973: 32).

No mention of the tillers of the soil! “The knight is of the very essence of feudalism, more fundamental than the fief, which, after all, was devised for his support” (Brown, 1973: 24). Preconquest England was hence not feudal because

No native knights, then, in pre-Conquest England, and . . . no knightly, vassalic, commendation. In such circumstances we

should not expect to find the fief, that is the knight's fee, designed for his support and bestowed upon him by investiture in the three-fold ceremony of feudal commendation . . . (Brown, 1973: 45).

The beginning of feudalism in England is seen by Brown in the Norman Conquest of 1066. Feudalism in England was an importation, not a spontaneous growth. Hence it was more perfected than in Normandy. Writing about the "migration of legal institutions" and the perfection of feudalism in postconquest England, Bloch said, "In the countries where feudalism was an importation, it was much more systematically organized than in those where its development had been purely spontaneous" (1961: 187-88).

Henri Pirenne saw in feudalism a stark contrast with that of Greco-Roman civilizations. The latter was urban, the former rural. The latter was based on "centralized sovereignty," the former on "parcellized sovereignty." He wrote:

The feudal system simply represents the disintegration of public authority in the hands of its agents, who, by reason of the very fact that each one of them held a portion of the soil, had become independent and considered the authority with which they were invested as a part of their patrimony. In fact, the appearance of feudalism in Western Europe in the course of the ninth century was nothing but the repercussion in the political sphere of the return of society to a purely rural civilization (Pirenne, 1937: 8).

What is perhaps the most important difference between the Marxist and "non-Marxist" views on feudalism is that the latter take feudalism as a one-"class" system, as a relation established among the various steps in the hierarchical ladder of rank and order, while the former take feudalism as essentially a two-"class" society in which the relation between the direct producers and the appropriators of surplus is the most crucial.¹⁰

Perhaps the most ambitious and grand comparative study of the political "superstructures" of "feudalism" is that of Perry Anderson's *Lineages of the Absolutist State*. As Dobb was taken to be one of the last hangers of "Stalinism" in British historiography, the new generation of

Marxists could not agree on the exclusion of the superstructural realms in the definition of feudalism, since “extra-economic coercion” is *the* identity card of “pre-capitalist” formations. Accordingly, Perry Anderson came out with a theory that takes *both* the base and superstructure in feudalism as *equally* necessary in the definition of feudalism, thereby locating himself somewhere between the Dobbs and the Browns. This necessity emanates from the “specificity” of “pre-capitalist class formations,” as opposed to capitalism.

All modes of production in class societies prior to capitalism extract surplus labour from the immediate producers by means of extra-economic coercion. Capitalism is the first mode of production in history in which the means whereby the surplus is pumped out of the direct producers is “purely” economic in form—the wage contract: the equal exchange between free agents which reproduces, hourly and daily, inequality and oppression. All other previous modes of production operate through *extra-economic* sanctions—kin, customary, religious, legal or political. It is therefore on principle always impossible to read them off from economic relations as such (Anderson, 1979: 403).

That capitalism is identified by non-“extra-economic coercion” is argued throughout Anderson’s book. *How much extra is extra no one knows*. And when one finds a “case” like capitalism in South Africa, it is glossed over as a mere aberration, an anomaly, an exception. The thesis that capitalism is non-“extra-economic-coercion” is the most enduring intellectual hegemony of liberalism over Marxism. Marxists, alongside their liberal compatriots, “forget” that capitalism is an “economic” system orchestrated, defended, and reproduced on an extended scale by the remote control of the “political” machinery called the “state.” Force was not only the midwife of capitalism, but also its nursing mother and protective father. After all, is it not obvious that it was the “state” itself that defined the boundary between the “private” and the “public,” the “political” and the “economic”? The liberal illusion, shared by many Marxists, about the market taking care of itself is exposed to be wrong every time there is “economic” crisis and/or civil “disturbance.” Then, the “state intervenes”! When scholars confuse an ideal-typical construct, like *Capital*, Vol. I, with real historical processes, the results have been blunders.

Following his methodology of extra versus non-extra-economic coercion as the dividing line between “pre-capitalist” — which by the way collapses the Abbasid Caliphate (“... the wealthiest and most advanced civilization in the world” [Anderson, 1979: 508] of its time, i.e., the ninth century) Pharaonic Egypt, Mughal India, the Ottoman Empire, Inca Peru, Orthodox Christian Ethiopia, Mandarin China, archaic Dahomey, and the “gift economy” of Papua New Guinea in one pot. Anderson defined feudalism thus:

Feudalism as a mode of production was originally defined by an organic *unity* of economy and polity, paradoxically distributed in a chain of parcellized sovereignties throughout the social formation. [Bloch’s “fragmentation of authority.”] The institution of serfdom as a mechanism of surplus extraction fused economic exploitation and politico-legal coercion at the molecular level of the village. The lord in his turn typically owed liege-loyalty and knight-service to a seignorial overlord [Bloch’s vassalage] who claimed the land as his ultimate domain (1979: 19).

That the organic unity of economy and polity at the village level in which surplus was extracted through extra-economic coercion as the definition of feudalism cannot be reconciled with the thesis that Absolutism is a feudal state goes without saying. In order to “solve” this inconsistency, Anderson seems to make two definitions for feudalism: one for parcellized sovereignties, and another for centralized sovereignties. Obviously, the latter is the negation of the economy-polity organic unity at the village level. He seems to forget that the organ is no more an organ if what unites it is dismembered; or at best it is a disabled organ, a disabled feudalism. Both logically and historically, it is inconsistent to sit on two stools — parcellized and centralized sovereignties — and shift from one stool to the other in order to defend a feudalism that cannot fit the two stools. And how Absolutism — with its standing army, uniform taxation, the “rediscovery” of Roman law, the beginning of Weber’s rational bureaucracy, the formation of a “national market”, etc. — can go *pari passu* with extra-economic coercion is a mystery. Anderson answers a series of questions by using the term “paradox.” Paradox is used as a *deus ex machina* explanation when logical consistency loses its power due to the excessive empiricism of factual taxonomies.

The bourgeoisie in the West was already strong enough to leave its blurred impress on the State, under Absolutism. For the apparent paradox of Absolutism in Western Europe was that it fundamentally represented an apparatus for the protection of aristocratic property and privileges, yet at the same time the means whereby this protection was promoted could *simultaneously* ensure the basic interests of the nascent mercantile and manufacturing classes" (Anderson, 1979: 40).

Hence, Absolutism created its own grave-diggers. How "blurred" the "impress" of the bourgeoisie on Absolutist states was will be discussed later.

The theoretical inconsistency and double-standard of Anderson's Absolutism becomes very clear in his "comparative" analysis of Western and Eastern Absolutism in Europe.

The Absolutist State in the West was the redeployed political apparatus of a feudal class which had accepted the commutation of dues. It was *compensation for the disappearance of serfdom*, in the context of an increasingly urban economy which it did not completely control and to which it had to adapt. The Absolutist State in the East, by contrast, was the repressive machine of a feudal class that had just erased the traditional communal freedoms of the poor. It was a *device for the consolidation of serfdom*, in a landscape scoured of autonomous urban life or resistance (Anderson, 1979: 195).

Absolutism becomes the standard ground for comparison. Serfdom, its existence or otherwise, becomes a variation on a theme. Is this not standing historical materialism on its head? The superstructure as the invariant standard of comparison based on variant *economic* relationships? Whether there was Serfdom (as in eastern Europe) or not (as in western Europe), there was the same state structure—Absolutism! But Anderson seems to have noticed that his historical materialism is standing on its head so he attempts to put it right side up. Accordingly, the rise of the Absolutist States in eastern Europe is explained in an "international" context, as a result of the pressure from the more advanced Absolutism of the West.

It was the international pressure of Western Absolutism, the political apparatus of a more powerful feudal aristocracy, rul-

ing more advanced societies, which obliged the Eastern nobility to adopt an equivalently centralized state machine to survive. For otherwise the superior military force of the reorganized and magnified Absolutist armies would inevitably take its toll in the normal medium of inter-feudal competition: war (Anderson, 1979: 197–98).

This “international” character of the rise and consolidation of Eastern Absolutism through pressure from the West emanates from *the* characteristic feature of the place extra-economic coercion occupies in “pre-capitalist” social relationships in general, and feudalism in particular.

Transnational interaction within feudalism was typically just at the *political*, not the economic level, precisely because it was a mode of production founded on extra-economic coercion: conquest, not commerce, was its primary form of expansion. The uneven development of feudalism within Europe thus found its most characteristic and direct expression, not in balances of trade, but in balances of arms, between the respective regions of the continent. In other words, the main mediation between East and West in these centuries was military (Anderson, 1979: 197).

Leaving the rather flimsy distinction between war, for feudalism, and commerce, for capitalism, made by Anderson, aside (the two had been twins in the history of *capitalism* itself), we are again presented with a double standard for explaining Absolutism in eastern Europe. The first is that eastern European Absolutism arose through the consolidation of serfdom by the feudal lord “class.” Here it was the elimination of the communal rights of the “peasants” and the establishment of consolidated serfdom that explains the rise of Eastern Absolutism. The second explanation is quite different. It was the military threat from Western Absolutism that forced the Eastern feudal lord “class” to organize their own Absolutism in a hothouse fashion. Two fundamentally different explanations for the same “problematic,” “internal” and “external.” As a historical materialist, Anderson cannot but give primacy to the “internal” factor, although this does not seem to be obvious from his discussion.

Despite all these, Anderson seems to add still more to his list of inconsistencies. “In Poland, classical land of the ‘second serfdom,’ no

Absolutist State ever emerged, although this was a failure for which the noble class was eventually to pay with its national existence" (Anderson, 1979: 196). The Polish case seems to be the best example in which Anderson's theory of Eastern Absolutism should be explained *primarily* as one of "external" pressure from the more advanced Western counterpart. In this case, the explanation for the rise of Eastern Absolutism becomes a mere textbook knowledge of competition of states in the "international" arena wherein the advanced whip the backward with the giant historical motto: *catch up, or perish*. Poland failed to catch up, so it perished. One need not be a Marxist to argue thus.

Not only was the coming-to-be of Eastern Absolutism due to the military pressure from the West, but its eventual demise also. The demise of Serfdom especially was accomplished by the same military prowess of the advanced West.

Once again, it was the shock of military attack from the West, which had once contributed to bring Eastern Absolutism into existence, that finally brought serfdom on which it had rested to an end. For now the assault came from capitalist states, and could not long be resisted. Napoleon's victory at Jena led directly to the legal emancipation of the Prussian peasantry in 1811. Alexander II's defeat in the Crimea precipitated the formal emancipation of the Russian serfs in 1861. Yet in neither case did these reforms mean the end of Absolutism itself, in Eastern Europe. The life-span of the two, contrary to linear expectations, but in conformity with the oblique march of history, did not coincide: the Absolutist State in the East . . . was to survive the abolition of serfdom (Anderson, 1979: 235).

Since Absolutism outlived Serfdom, the external "determinancy" of the coming-to-be of Eastern Absolutism from the military pressure of the West becomes even more pronounced. Alas, eastern Europe is a mere footnote to its Western counterpart!

Like Anderson, Lenin attributed the victory of Japan over Russia during the 1904-05 war to the differences of their social systems: advanced capitalist Japan; backward, feudal Russia. Alas, the victory of Ethiopia over Italy at the battle of Adwa was hence a victory of advanced, capitalist Ethiopia over backward, feudal Italy!! That military strength can develop unevenly with that of either economic strength

or the nature of social systems goes without saying. Compare the military might of Vietnam today with its economic base!

Since Absolutism outlived serfdom in eastern Europe, its coming to an end is conceived by Anderson as follows:

it is necessary to have the courage to draw the consequences. *The Russian Revolution was not made against a capitalist State at all* [N.B. the "at all"]. The Tsarism which fell in 1917 was a feudal apparatus: the Provisional Government never had time to replace it with a new or stable bourgeois apparatus. The Bolsheviks made a *socialist revolution*, but from beginning to end they never confronted the *central enemy* of the workers' movement in the West. . . . The First World War brought to an end the long history of European Absolutism (1979: 359).

The rise, consolidation, and demise of Eastern Absolutism was primarily the work of the "West"!

The entire theoretical and historical treatise of Anderson is constructed to "prove" one point: the superiority and one-way initiative of the "West"! There are two issues he raises to "prove" this. First is that western Europe was the only place where capitalism arose. And since capitalism is more advanced than pre-capitalism, according to the canons of seniority of social formations, so it is. Second is that, since capitalism arose out of feudalism and feudalism only, he has to restrict the application of the term feudal to *Europe* only, both west and east, the former, of course, being more advanced than the latter.

Anderson begins his attack on the universality of feudalism, which had become a common stock-in-trade among "Third World" Marxists by calling their "societies" feudal, with these words:

Political reaction against the imperial ideologies of European superiority has led to intellectual extension of historiographic concepts derived from the past of one continent [i.e., Europe] to explain the evolution of others [i.e., the "Three Continents"], or all. No term has undergone such an indiscriminate and pervasive diffusion as that of feudalism, which has often in practice been applied to any social formation between tribal and capitalist poles of identity, unstamped by slavery. . . . All privilege to Western development is thereby held to disappear,

in the multiform process of a world history secretly single from the start. Feudalism, in this version of materialist historiography, becomes an absolving ocean in which virtually any society may receive its baptism (1979: 401–02).

True, one should not commit the sin of infringing upon the rights and privileges of the “specificity of Europe.” True, one should not see a feudal lord in every chief sitting on a golden stool. But this does not explain why the term feudal should be restricted to Europe alone. What is the relation between the *concept* “feudalism” and the *geography* of Europe? According to Anderson, the secret in the specificity of Europe as feudal lies in the realms of the superstructure of feudalism which is supposed not to be found elsewhere in the world, save Europe, with the “exception” of Japan. Lashing out against those Marxists who take the view that the economic base should be the determining criterion for identifying social formations, including feudalism, and not be confused by adding the superstructure, Anderson commented:

Juridical and constitutional systems become [in this kind of Marxism] facultative and external elaborations on an invariant productive centre. Political and legal infrastructures are divorced from the economic infrastructure that alone constitutes the actual feudal mode of production as such . . . the parcelized sovereignty, vassal hierarchy and fief system of medieval Europe cease to be in any respect original or essential characteristics of feudalism. Their complete absence is compatible with the presence of a feudal social formation, so long as a combination of large-scale agrarian exploitation and peasant production, founded on extra-economic relations of coercion and dependence, obtains. Thus Ming China, Seljuk Turkey, Genghisid Mongolia, Safavid Persia, Mughal India, Tulunid Egypt, Umayyad Syria, Almoravid Morocco, Wahabite Arabia – all become equally amenable to classification as feudal, on a par with Capetian France, Norman England or Hohenstaufen Germany (1979: 401–02).

Perhaps so. But we need logical consistency here. If, indeed, what makes Wahabite Arabia so un-feudal as opposed to Norman England is that the latter had “parcelized sovereignty, vassal hierarchy and fief

system,” which are “essential characteristics of feudalism,” and the former did not, is it not also the case that the difference between Elizabethan England and Norman England is so wide that to call the two cases feudal, as Anderson does, is not, after all, that different from calling Wahabite Arabia feudal? What is Absolutism if not the disappearance of the “essential characteristics of feudalism” — “parcellized sovereignty, vassal hierarchy and fief system”? Anderson wants to have it both ways, i.e., that on one hand, there is no feudalism outside Europe, save Japan, because of the absence of the three “essential characteristics of feudalism” spelled out by him earlier, and on the other, that in England up until the 1640’s the Absolutist State was *feudal*, overthrown by the “bourgeois revolution,” despite its *centralized* sovereignty, as opposed to parcellized, *bureaucratic rule*, as opposed to vassalage, and *capitalist landed property*, as opposed to fiefdom. He has a double standard in identifying feudalism: one “*political*,” applied to parcellized sovereignties; and another “*economic*,” used for centralized sovereignty — Absolutism. The rise of Absolutism is explained as the demise of the “*political*” institutions of parcellized sovereignties, while the continuation of feudalism under Absolutism is explained as being the continuation of the “*economic*” relations of parcellized sovereignties. The only logically “consistent” view Anderson presents is a geographical one, i.e., Europe! A good “logician” wrote that, if indeed Absolutism negated the “essential characteristics of feudalism,” it is the case that the “redeployment” “precisely involved substituting capitalist domination for feudal domination, whatever the outer shell of public terminology [may be]” (Wallerstein, 1980: II, 32).

No, Anderson is impervious to the logic of logical consistency. With a rebound strength of literary beauty, buttressed with a vengeance of rare style that makes one envious, he wrote:

For if, in effect, the feudal mode of production can be defined independently of the variant juridical and political superstructures which accompany it, such that its presence can be registered through the globe wherever primitive and tribal social formations were superseded, the problem then arises: how is the unique dynamism of the European theatre of international feudalism to be explained? No historians have yet claimed that industrial capitalism developed spontaneously anywhere else ex-

cept in Europe [read: western Europe; to be precise, England; to be still more precise, some parts of England] and its American extension, which then, precisely, conquered the rest of the world by virtue of this economic primacy, arresting or implanting the capitalist mode of production abroad according to the needs and drives of its own imperial system. If there was a common economic foundation of feudalism right across the whole land mass from the Atlantic to the Pacific, divided merely by juridical and constitutional forms, and yet one zone [read: region in a country] produced the industrial revolution that was eventually to lead to the transformation of all societies everywhere, the determinant of its transcendent success must be sought in the political and legal superstructures *that alone distinguish it* [emphasis added]. Laws and States, dismissed as secondary and insubstantial, reemerge with a vengeance, as the apparent authors of the most momentous break in modern history. In other words, once the whole structure of sovereignty and legality is *dissociated* from the economy of universal feudalism, its shadow paradoxically governs the world: for it becomes the only principle capable of explaining the differential development of the whole mode of production. The very omnipresence of feudalism in this conception reduces the fate of the continents to the surface play of mere local usages. A colour-blind materialism, incapable of appreciating the real and rich spectrum of diverse social totalities within the same temporal band of history, thus inevitably ends in a perverse idealism (1979: 402–03).

A very critical paragraph for understanding Anderson's grand project. Two issues are confused here. First, the centrality of the legal-political realms of the superstructure in identifying feudalism is put together with a discussion of the Industrial Revolution. Secondly, and linked to the first point, is Anderson's own "colour-blind materialism, incapable of appreciating the real and rich spectrum of diverse social totalities within the same temporal band of history" when it comes to the question of identifying *Europe*. It is ironical that Anderson takes Europe unproblematically. He seems not to appreciate that Europe is a *concept*, and not a mere geopolitical entity.¹¹ By arguing as if the Industrial Revolution started in *Europe*, and not in some parts of England,

by arguing as if Europe had a unitary history, of course, with the exception of Christendom, by “forgetting” that the way capitalism developed in eastern Europe was *fundamentally* the same as it developed in China, through the forceful “opening” up of these “backward” regions to the “civilizing” effects of modern commerce, he artificially unifies the history of a continent which otherwise had been torn by innumerable “internal” schisms. Capitalism did not organically grow *out* of feudalism in Russia, for example. “It” was “imposed” from “outside.” The Narodniks’ argument that capitalism is “unnatural” in Russia was meant to make this very point. Russia, like many eastern European countries, was one of the first “neo-colonial” states in the modern world. Compared to India, Brazil, or China, Russia shows much more similarities with them than with western Europe. In a footnote, Anderson said of Russia, “. . . Russian development formed part of European feudalism as a whole, while there was never any true Islamic feudalism” (1979: 419). What “true” feudalism is, as opposed to “false” feudalism, and what “Islamic feudalism” is, as opposed to “Christian feudalism” is a mystery!¹²

Anderson seems not to be blind to the rather elusive nature of the *concept* “Europe.” He sees the differences in Europe, but based on fundamental similarities. But one social body present in Europe is declared to be alien to the continent: the Ottoman Empire. In a typical medieval fashion, he exclaimed:

The Ottoman State, occupant of South-eastern Europe for five hundred years, camped [sic!] in the continent without ever becoming naturalized into its social or political system. It always remained largely a stranger to European culture, as an *Islamic intrusion into Christendom* [the pope loves this!!] and has posed intractable problems of presentation to unitary histories of the continent to this day. In fact, the long and intimate presence on European soil of a social formation and State structure in such contrast with the prevalent pattern of the continent, provides an opposite measure against which to assess the historical specificity of European society before the advent of industrial capitalism. From the Renaissance onwards, indeed, European political thinkers in the age of Absolutism repeatedly sought to define the character of their own world by opposition with that

of the Turkish order, so close and yet so remote from it; none of them reduced the distance simply or mainly to one of religion (Anderson, 1979: 397).

Five centuries of Islamic *intrusion*, as if Europe was predestined to be Christian by some law of divine necessity. Fernand Braudel, in a work dealing with the *Mediterranean*, passed the Ottoman part of it with a mere declaration of ignorance.¹³ Despite Spinoza, ignorance can indeed be a sufficient argument! It sets limits to the boundary of one's knowledge.

With the Ottoman part of Europe thus excluded, the rest, which is identical with Christendom, becomes the real Europe, the Europe minus the "Infidel."¹⁴

After all this theoretical labor and grand comparative analyses, Anderson begins to demolish the fundamental assumption he has repeatedly made about Absolutism being a feudal state. Battling against what he calls the "promiscuous extension of the rubric of feudalism beyond Europe" (Anderson, 1979: 407),¹⁵ he *defined* feudalism thus:

feudalism *typically* involves the juridical serfdom and military protection of the peasantry by a social class of nobles, enjoying individual authority and property, and *exercising an exclusive monopoly of law and private rights of justice, within a political framework of fragmented sovereignty* and subordinate fiscality, and an aristocratic ideology exalting rural life (Anderson, 1979: 407; emphases added).

The emphasized words give the lie to the idea of Absolutism as a feudal state *on the very basis of Anderson's logico-historical schema itself*. Absolutism is centralized sovereignty, as opposed to parcellized; it is urban, as opposed to rural; it is based on the "monopoly of legitimate violence" by the state, as opposed to fragmented legitimate violences by the various noble estates, etc. Every major attribute of parcellized sovereignty as being *typical* of feudalism is eliminated under Absolutism. And *yet* Anderson sticks to his label of feudal attached to Absolutism. Anderson offers us still more:

The singularity of feudalism was never exhausted merely by the existence of seigneurial and serf classes as such. It was their specific organization in a vertically articulated system of sovereignty

and scalar property that distinguished the feudal mode of production in Europe. It was this concrete nexus which spelt out the precise type of extra-economic coercion exercised over the direct producer (1979: 408).

Again the same old gum: feudalism as parcellized sovereignty coupled with seigneur/serf “class” distinction. Only one region outside Europe was allowed to join the club of feudalism: Japan. Japan is treated as “honorably European.” What makes Japan alone “different” from the rest of the non-European world and similar to Europe? It is that Japan had “its” own feudalism. “Above all, Japanese feudalism too was defined by a rigorous parcellization of sovereignty and scalar private property in land” (Anderson, 1979: 414). So far so good. Then comes the bombshell:

The basic parallelism of the [European and Japanese] great experiences of feudalism, at the opposite ends of Eurasia, was ultimately to receive its most arresting confirmation of all, *in the posterior destiny of each zone*. European feudalism . . . proved the gateway to capitalism. It was the economic dynamic of the feudal mode of production in Europe which released the elements for primitive accumulation of capital on a continental scale, and it was the social order of the Middle Ages which preceded and prepared the ascent of the bourgeois class that accomplished it. The full capitalist mode of production, launched by the industrial revolution, was the gift and malediction of Europe to the globe [!!!!]. Today, in the second half of the twentieth century, only one major region outside Europe or its *overseas settlements* [what a term, a colonial hangover] has achieved an advanced capitalism: Japan. The socio-economic preconditions of Japanese capitalism . . . lie deep in the Nipponic feudalism which so struck Marx and Europeans in the later nineteenth century (Anderson, 1979: 414–15; emphases added).

Hence, what makes Japan feudal is partly because capitalism developed there “independently.” And since “native” capitalism comes out of feudalism only, so Japan becomes feudal. The military-style march of social formations, one following another, one coming out of the “womb,” in Marx’s anatomical symbolism, of another, is discerned quite clearly in this argument of Anderson.¹⁶

Then begins Anderson's labor of Sisyphus. In the next paragraph, he destroys his own argument for Japanese capitalism coming out of Japanese feudalism, the latter as the "precondition" of the former, as follows:

For although Japan was ultimately to achieve a tempo of industrialization more rapid than that of any capitalist country in Europe or North America, the *fundamental* [emphasis added] impetus for its tempestuous transition to the capitalist mode of production in the late 19th and 20th century was *exogenous* [emphasis in the original]. It was the impact of Western imperialism on Japanese feudalism that suddenly galvanized internal forces into a total transformation of the traditional order (1979: 415–16).

According to this statement, then, Japan is not that different, after all, from South Korea, Taiwan, or Singapore. In all these places, and many others, the "fundamental impetus" for capitalist development was "exogenous." So why not call them feudal prior to the "fundamental impetus"?

In his summation of the comparison between Europe and Japan, Anderson has this Categorical Imperative to make:

Yet, having stressed the fundamental parallelism between European and Japanese feudalism, . . . there remains the simple, enormous fact of their divergent outcome. Europe, from the Renaissance onwards, accomplished the transition to capitalism under its own impulsion [!!], in a process of constant global expansion. The industrial revolution which was ultimately set off by the primitive accumulation of capital on an international scale during the early modern epoch, was a spontaneous, gigantic combustion of all the forces of production, unexampled in its power and universal in its reach. *Nothing comparable occurred in Japan, and despite all the advances of the Tokugawa epoch, there was no sign that anything like it was imminent.* It was the impact of Euro-American imperialism which destroyed the old political order in Japan, and it was the import of Western technology which rendered an indigenous industrialization possible from the materials of its socio-economic heritage. Feudalism *permitted*

Japan — alone among Asian, African or Amerindian societies — to enlist in the ranks of advanced capitalism, once imperialism had become a world-conquering system: *it did not generate a native capitalism of its own momentum, in Pacific isolation. There was thus no inherent drive within the feudal mode of production which inevitably compelled it to develop into the capitalist mode of production.* The concrete record of comparative history suggests no easy evolutionism (1979: 419–20; emphasis added).

Anderson stripped Japan of its “honorary European” status and made “it” just like any other part of the world. What made Japan unique among non-European social formations, feudalism, was not to lead her into her “own” “native” capitalism. For the latter to happen, Japan had to wait for the “gift” of Euro-America.¹⁷ It is simply puzzling for a scholar of Anderson’s calibre not to be able to comprehend that “once imperialism had become a *world-conquering system*,” it needs no *permission* from a certain feudalism in a remote corner of the Far East for capitalism to develop. Once you have a “*world-conquering system*,” capitalism can develop, as it has developed, everywhere and anywhere, be it the “high civilization” of the Ottomans or the “primitive tribes” of Africa and the Pacific, be it the Middle Kingdom that treated all but itself as barbarians, or the pious Hindu in his meditation to reach Nirvana. *Capitalism needs no permission from a previously-existing feudalism to develop.* Once capitalism sets foot, it is moved by its own internal logic of capital accumulation, and no Chinese wall could stand up against it.

Despite his personal distaste for the crudity of the Stalinist historical straightjacket of the slavery-feudalism-capitalism succession-cum-progression, Anderson is so entangled in it that he cannot help destroy his arguments in a “gap” found in the next paragraph.

In his final resume of the discussion about the differences between European and Japanese feudalism, Anderson resembles an Ethiopian *debtara*, counting his ancestral pedigree in a typical Biblical fashion of begetting: Anderson turns to his favorite empiricist whine—genealogy—“genuine” or “bogus” notwithstanding!¹⁸

What, then, was the specificity of European history, which separated it so deeply from Japanese history, despite the common cycle of feudalism which otherwise so closely united the two?

The answer surely lies in the perdurable inheritance of classical antiquity. . . . What rendered the unique passage to capitalism possible in Europe was *the concatenation of antiquity and feudalism*. In other words, to grasp the secret of the emergence of the capitalist mode of production in Europe, it is necessary to discard in the most radical way possible any conception of it as simply an evolutionary subsumption of a lower mode of production by a higher mode of production, the one generated automatically and entirely from within the other by an organic internal succession, and therewith effacing it (1979: 420).

The last sentence, with its quasi-dialectical jargon, is directed against Japan. For throughout his work, Anderson has argued that feudalism is essentially “responsible” for the rise of capitalism in Europe. But the moment he discovered a Japanese feudalism that should, by his own logic, also lead to capitalism, he changed gears and drove backwards in historical time. He found refuge in European antiquity.

The *concatenation* of the ancient and feudal modes of production was necessary to yield the capitalist mode of production in Europe—a relationship that was not merely one of diachronic sequence, but also at a certain stage of synchronic articulation. *The classical past awoke again within the feudal present to assist the arrival of the capitalist future* [emphasis added], both unimaginably more distant and strangely nearer to it. For the birth of capital, also saw, as we know, the rebirth of antiquity. The Renaissance remains—despite every criticism and revision—the crux of European history as a whole: the double moment of an equally unexampled expansion of space, and recovery of time [!!]. It is at this point, with the rediscovery of the Ancient World, and the discovery of the New World [???!!!], that the European state-system acquired its full singularity. A ubiquitous global power was eventually to be the outcome of this singularity, and the end of it (Anderson, 1979: 422).

Anderson, at his best, which is also the worst! Antiquity was born twice, he argued. He “forgot” to add: the first time as historical, the second time as farce. He argued about the “double moment,” the congruence of “rediscovery” of Antiquity with that of the “discovery of the

New World” as if Antiquity has anything to do with the most brutal human genocide committed in the name of civilization, euphemistically called “discovery of New World.” “New” for whom? “Discovery” by whom? From Antiquity to New England, Anderson stretched an unbroken “great chain” of time and space, skipping over “dark” spots as residual. How can one write a better history of “Western civilization”? “Classical past,” “feudal present,” and “capitalist future” are marvelously put in historical succession and logical symbiosis as if tenses pass for history.¹⁹ After all, if what we are dealing with is the history of “Western civilization,” then is not a William McNeill more authoritative than a Perry Anderson? A McNeill, who, in his *The Rise of the West*, the title is quite fitting to his work, starts with the statement that in the beginning was darkness, then came the light of civilization from Mesopotamia, followed by the “rise of a cosmopolitan civilization in the Middle East, 1700–500 BC” whose civilizational heritage was passed over to Greece and Rome? Ali Mazrui’s comment elsewhere that the biggest “theft” of “Europe” was the Europeanization in *conception* of ancient Greece, and we can add, ancient Rome, which were both *mainly* Mediterranean civilizations, is best used to diagnose Anderson’s ideology dressed up as history.

And Japan, well, her Original Sin:

The “advantage” of Europe over Japan lay in its classical antecedence, which, after the Dark Ages did not disappear “behind” it, but survived [“thanks” to the Arabs] in certain basic respects “in front” of it. In this sense, the concrete historical genesis of feudalism in Europe, far from vanishing like fire and vapour into the terrestrial solidity of its accomplished structure, had tangible effects on its final dissolution (Anderson, 1979: 421).

One long Europe, all the way from Homer down to Anderson himself—one pedigree, one long genealogy, punctured by “phases” called social formations in which one mode of production among the many coexisting simultaneously is dominant! Is this not a text-book “history of Western civilization” course meant for undergraduate students?²⁰ Why stop at the *European* part of antiquity alone? Why not have the “courage” to go all the way to the “origin” and include, like Martin Bernal did in his excellent work, *Black Athena*, the civilizations

of Pharaonic Egypt and Mesopotamia? Is it not the case that in the “tangible effect on the final dissolution” of feudalism, the civilizations that preceded Greco-Roman civilization from whom the latter “inherited” its “civilizational project” should be included since “far from vanishing like fire and vapour into the terrestrial solidity” they rather leave their civilizational imprint on their successors?²¹

All this indefatigable labor and ostentatious investment of shibboleths and jargon just to make one point: that Japan did not have a Greco-Roman antecedent! What a monumental discovery: the Japanese are not “Europeans”! The specificity of European feudalism lies in its having a Greco-Roman antecedent. Marvelous! The specificity of Ethiopia lies in its having an Aksumite antecedent! And since there was no other Aksum but that of Ethiopia, this is specificity! Accordingly, every region, every people, have some kind of specificities of their own, so much so that everything becomes specificity, i.e., nothing becomes specificity. Even the very statement, “the specificity of Europe lies in its Greco-Roman antecedent,” is half true because a good part of Greco-Roman civilization was outside “Europe.” That there was no “Europe” during the Greco-Roman times is a rather elementary knowledge that needs no reiteration. By using a modern *concept*, Europe, to define a remote past, Greco-Rome, Anderson commits the same error as those being committed by “African” nationalists, when they say that Pharaonic Egypt was an *African* civilization, a “Black” civilization. Poor souls, they “forgot” that “Black” is not a *color* of *skin* but a *concept* of social relations under capitalism, and that “Africa” is a *concept* “created” by “non-Africans,” “Europeans.”

One of the most highly acclaimed Marxist works on feudalism and Absolutism turns out to be a tome full of inconsistencies, logical contradictions, ignorance as residuality (cf. in relation to Ethiopia), and the Cardinal Sin — civilizational arrogance based on the supposed superiority of Europe and its “overseas settlements.” The scholarly nut of Anderson is not that hard to crack. Beneath the façade of Marxism and theoretical sophistication, dressed up in beautiful literary language, is found the sediment of the entire corpus — *Orientalism painted red*! That the whole obsession with the specificity of Europe is a mere continuation of the Orientalist project started by these Enlightenment “antecedents” is not hard to see. What is the basic difference between Montesquieu and Anderson, between the *Spirit of the Laws* and *Line-*

ages? Not much. In both cases, the “specificity” of Europe is the sedimentary rock upon which the differences in top soil are based. There is a difference of language. However, the Orientalist perspective remains the same. In Anderson’s case, it becomes the *continuation of Orientalism by other means*. The other means is provided by theoretical Marxism.²² Anderson’s long critique of the theory of the Asiatic mode of production included in the appendix of his *Lineages* is *not* a critique of Orientalism as discourse. It is, rather, a “Marxist” correction and critique of Marxism itself, so that Marxism can be “rectified” on the basis of new, empirical data on the “Orient.”

The methodological foundation for all these inconsistencies on Anderson’s part is, of course, the most cherished “inheritance” in the history of modern Great Britain—Empiricism. It is the empiricist methodology of hunting for specificities that is the Achilles’ heel of Anderson’s project. This typical British disease, the “crude English style,” as Marx once called it, on the planes of methodology, coupled with a self-consciousness of superiority, is the key problem in Anderson’s tome. A mere shift to the fundamental historical reality of capitalism—that it is, and has always been a *world* system, a quite commonplace knowledge in Marx’s, Engels’s and Lenin’s writings—would have enabled Anderson to come out with a more sound methodological and historical approach to the history of the rise of capitalism than his empiricist and supremacist diatribe on the “specificity of Europe.”

In these intensely argued views of Perry Anderson on the history of Absolutism from a “Marxist” standpoint,²³ where do the founders of Marxism themselves stand? My merciless criticism of Anderson’s work is so far based on its own internal inconsistencies and double standards. It is time now for Marx and Engels to settle accounts with their successors, in this case Perry Anderson.

Three cardinal issues are the key to Anderson’s project: the nature of Absolutism; the theory of feudalism; and the previous two are ultimately linked to the question of bourgeois revolutions. Anderson’s thesis that the Absolutist State is feudal is meant to explain that the 1648, 1789, etc., revolutions were bourgeois revolutions as much as to study Absolutism itself in its own right. For if the Absolutist States were not feudal, how can one explain the English and French revolutions?²⁴ Let us begin with bourgeois revolutions.

Bourgeois Revolution. Simply put: is bourgeois revolution *necessary* for

the development of capitalism? It all depends on what one means by “bourgeois revolution.”²⁵ And, once we know that a certain revolution is a “bourgeois revolution,” how do we know that the bourgeois rules, or, to use the famous military metaphor, “captures state power”? Is capitalism coterminous with bourgeois rule? Let us turn to Engels’s “Special Introduction” to his famous text, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*. He wrote:

It seems a law of historical development that the bourgeoisie can in no European country get hold of political power [this was written on April 20th, 1892!] — at least for any length of time — in the same way in which the feudal aristocracy kept hold of it during the Middle Ages. Even in France, where feudalism was completely extinguished, the bourgeoisie, as a whole, has held full possession of the Government for very short periods only. During Louis Philippe’s reign, 1830–48, a very small portion of the bourgeoisie ruled the kingdom; by far the larger part were excluded from the suffrage by the high qualification. Under the Second Republic, 1848–51, the whole bourgeoisie ruled, but for three years only; their incapacity brought on the Second Empire. It is only now, in the Third Republic [a century *after* the French Revolution of 1789], that the bourgeoisie as a whole have kept possession of the helm for more than twenty years; and they are already showing lively signs of decadence. *A durable reign of the bourgeoisie has been possible only in countries like America, where feudalism was unknown, and society at the very beginning started from a bourgeois basis. . . .*

In England, the bourgeoisie *never* held undivided sway. Even the victory of 1832 [almost two centuries *after* the English “bourgeois revolution”] left the landed aristocracy in almost exclusive possession of all the leading Government offices (1968c: 394; emphasis added).

What a paradox! In the lands of bourgeois revolutions, England and France, the latter called the “most dramatic of all bourgeois revolutions” (Soboul, 1977: 161), the “classic bourgeois revolution” (Soboul, 1971: 168), the bourgeoisie hardly ruled! They never ruled alone in the former, and ruled for only 23 years in a period of over a century

after the revolution in the latter.²⁶ What a paradox, only in America, where there was no feudal beginning, did the bourgeoisie rule undivided.²⁷ And yet, how can there be a bourgeois revolution in America since the twin targets of that revolution—feudalism and its protector, Absolutism, never existed! What a paradox, the bourgeoisie rules in a situation where there was no need for a bourgeois revolution in the first place—America. Contrary to this, in a situation where the “bourgeois revolutions” took place, the bourgeoisie hardly rules!

Why could not the English bourgeoisie rule? According to Engels:

The English bourgeoisie are, up to the present day [i.e., 1892], so deeply penetrated by a sense of their social inferiority [as opposed to the aristocracy] that they keep up, *at their own expense* and that of the nation, an ornamental caste of drones to represent the nation worthily at all state functions; and *they consider themselves highly honoured whenever one of themselves is found worthy of admission into this select and privileged body, manufactured, after all, by themselves.*

The industrial and commercial middle class had, therefore, not yet [in 1892] succeeded in driving the landed aristocracy completely from political power when another competitor, the working class, appeared on the stage (1968: 395; emphasis added).²⁸

The emphasized words tell the whole story. The assumption that the aristocracy is feudal, or its continued existence is a feudal remnant, is hard to swallow in light of the “fact” that it was the bourgeoisie themselves that “manufactured” this “select and privileged body.” How can the bourgeoisie manufacture their own natural enemy—the *feudal* aristocracy? Behind the use of the same term “aristocracy” is found a fundamentally different class altogether. What we have here is a *bourgeois* aristocracy, just a fraction of the bourgeois class, a *status*, as Lawrence Stone described it so well (Stone, 1965: 56).²⁹

So let there be no misunderstanding. “Landed aristocracy” in Engels’s usage of the term does not mean *feudal* landed aristocracy. Otherwise, it would mean that in Great Britain the *feudal* landed aristocracy were still in “almost exclusive possession of all the leading Government offices” in 1892, two and a half centuries *after* the “bourgeois revolu-

tion"! No. For Engels, landed aristocracy means that part of the *bourgeoisie* whose "income" is derived from capitalist *rent*, as opposed to capitalist *profit*, both of which are, as Marx argued in *Capital*, Vol. III, parts of surplus-value. In "sociological" language, the difference between the landed aristocracy and the bourgeoisie is one of *status*, not of *class*. The two belong to the same class—the bourgeoisie—but not to the same status-group. Why, then, did Engels use the term "landed aristocracy" in contrast to "bourgeoisie"? Simple. He reserved the latter term for the "industrial and commercial middle class" (Engels's own expression), and the former for the capitalist landlords.

The bourgeoisie need not have to rule by itself for its class interests to be represented and defended. In mid-nineteenth-century France, this was quite discernible:

By now stigmatising as "*socialistic*" what it had previously extolled as "liberal," the bourgeoisie confesses that its own interests dictate that it should be delivered from the danger of its *own rule*; that, in order to restore tranquility in the country, its bourgeois Parliament must, first of all, be given its quietus; that in order to preserve its social power intact, its political power must be broken; that the individual bourgeois can continue to exploit the other classes and to enjoy undisturbed property, family, religion and order only on condition that their class be condemned along with the other classes to like political nullity; that in order to save its purse, it must forfeit the crown, and the sword that is to safeguard it must at the same time be hung over its head as a sword of Damocles (Marx, 1968b: 132).

Marx at one of his best! Not only had the bourgeoisie *normally* shared power, but also for its own interest it must be relieved of the "dangers of its own rule"! The liberal-cum-"Marxist" sycophants, who, after defining capitalism as "free labor," think that this should have a "corresponding" superstructure of "free" political system, as in parliamentary liberal democracy, may find Marx's apt description rather "exceptional." Indeed Poulantzas came out with his theory of "exceptional states" (1974)—Fascism, Bonapartism, military dictatorship—the rule to the exceptions being bourgeois democracy. It is true that Marx is discussing an "exceptional" case, Bonapartism in mid-nineteenth-century France. The point is, and this is Marx's clear argument, that *the bour-*

geoisie, neither all of it, nor even a tiny part of it, need *not have to have a say in political power in order for its social-economic power to continue being reproduced undisturbed*. Actually, the further the bourgeoisie is removed from “the dangers of its own rule,” the better its social-economic power is reproduced. As for Poulantzas’ “exceptional states,” a mere *global* survey of capitalist development shows that his “exceptions” have been the rule; his rule, the exception. In Africa, Asia, and Latin America, military dictatorships are the rule. Even in Europe itself, compare the time of “historical capitalism” with that of democracy. A major part of the history of Western “historical capitalism” has been un-democratic, democracy defined by the very standards of bourgeois law itself.

But if we can indeed argue, as Engels and Marx did, that the rule of the bourgeoisie is not indispensable for the extended reproduction of capitalist social relations, then the theoretical legitimacy for “bourgeois revolution” evaporates into thin air.

Maybe not quite so. Comparing the “feebleness” and “cowardice” of the Prussian bourgeoisie with that of their French and British counterparts during the 1848 revolutions, Marx wrote:

The [Prussian] bourgeoisie was to represent, not its own interests, but the people’s interests against the Crown, that is, against itself, for it was a people’s movement that had prepared the way for it. But in bourgeois eyes the Crown was still an umbrella-by-the-Grace-of-God, behind which it could hide its profane interests. The untouchability of *its* own interests and the political forms corresponding to them were to be translated into constitutional language: untouchability of the Crown. Hence the enthusiasm of the German, and especially the Prussian, bourgeoisie for the constitutional monarchy (1971a: 460).

As opposed to this Prussian bourgeoisie, that “reneged” on its “historical mission” of making “bourgeois revolution,” was the experiences of 1648 and 1789.

The Prussian March Revolution must not be confused with either the English Revolution of 1648 or that of the French in 1789.

In 1648 the bourgeoisie was allied with the modern aristocra-

cy against the monarchy, the feudal nobility, and the dominant church.

In 1789 the bourgeoisie was allied with the people against the monarchy, the nobility, and the dominant church.

The Revolution of 1789 had for its model (at least in Europe) only the Revolution of 1648; the Revolution of 1648 had only the revolt of the Dutch against Spain. Both revolutions were a century apart not only in time but also in the content of their models.

In both revolutions the bourgeoisie was the class that really led the movement. The proletariat and segments of citizens not belonging to the bourgeoisie either had as yet no interests separate from those of the bourgeoisie or had not as yet developed independent classes or class division. Hence wherever it confronted the bourgeoisie, as, for an example, in France from 1793 to 1794, it fought for the realization of bourgeois interests, if not quite in the same manner. The whole French Reign of Terror was nothing but a *plebeian way* of getting rid of the *enemies of the bourgeoisie*, of absolutism, of feudalism, of philistinism (Marx, 1971a: 460–61).

A big relief for Anderson. Marx embraces a theory of “bourgeois revolution” led by the bourgeoisie, although the term “bourgeois revolution” is not used anywhere. The same pedigree as Anderson’s: Dutch, English, French Revolutions. Then, “suddenly,” just in the next paragraph, Marx became a naturalized Binghamtonian and starts to speak the language of world-systems theory, with a heavy nineteenth-century German accent, of course.

The revolutions of 1648 and 1789 were not English or French revolutions, but revolutions of a European type. *They were not the triumph of a particular class of society over the old political order; they were the proclamation of the political order for a new European society* [emphasis added]. The bourgeoisie won the victory, but *the victory of a new order of society* [emphasis in original] — the victory of bourgeois over feudal property, of nationalism over provincialism, of competition over guilds, of equality of inheritance over primogeniture, of the domination of the owners of land over the rule through landowners, of enlightenment over su-

perstition, of family over family name, of industriousness over gentlemanly slothfulness, of civic rights over medieval privileges. The Revolution of 1648 was the triumph of the seventeenth century over the sixteenth, the Revolution of 1789 was the victory of the eighteenth century over the seventeenth. *These revolutions were more the expressions of the needs of the then existing world than of mere geographic sectors of that world—England and France—in which they occurred* [emphasis added] (1971a: 461).³⁰

Inconsistency of two statements without even a gap of one paragraph between them? Or what? Marx, for *political* reasons, *inflated* the accomplishments of the English and French bourgeoisie so as to show how *little* their Prussian counterpart had achieved. To show the utter weakness of the Prussian bourgeoisie, Marx made a Hercules out of the English and French bourgeoisie.

Then Marx had this to say about the March Revolution in “Germany”: “The revolution was the people’s protest against an agreement between the bourgeoisie and the Crown. Hence the bourgeoisie, concerting with the Crown, had to protest against—the *revolution*” (Marx, 1971b: 462).³¹

The rather eschatological notion of “historical mission” of the bourgeoisie, and whether it has carried out this mission or not, is so famous and commonplace in Marxism that almost everyone has talked about it. And yet, the fact that the so-called “betrayal” of its “historical mission” by the bourgeoisie has been so common that it is the carrying out of the “mission” that is exceptional, anomalous while the “betrayal” is the rule, the norm seems to be forgotten in discussions on the “bourgeois revolution.”³²

The “betrayal” of the bourgeoisie did not start with the Prussian bourgeoisie of 1848. What was the English revolution of 1648 if not the “betrayal” of the bourgeoisie?

Frederick Engels, “the fox-hunting Manchester businessman,” as Christopher Hill would like to call him (1986c: III, 236), mentions “three great, decisive battles” of the bourgeoisie in its long fight against feudalism. These were the Protestant Reformation in “Germany” during the sixteenth century; the Calvinist movement in England during the seventeenth century; and, the “Great French Revolution” of the eighteenth century (Engels, 1968c: 388–91). The first two great bourgeois up-

heavals, according to Engels, were fought under the banner of religion. The French Revolution's war cry was secular; it was the "first that had entirely cast off the religious cloak, and was fought out on undisguised political lines . . ." (1968c: 391).

The differences between the English and French cases went beyond religion versus secularism. The French Revolution was the "first, too, that was really fought out up to the destruction of one of the combatants, the aristocracy, and the complete triumph of the other, the bourgeoisie" (Engels, 1968c: 391). Moreover,

In England the continuity of pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary institutions, and the compromise between landlords and capitalists, found its expression in the continuity of judicial precedents and in the religious preservation of the feudal forms of the law. In France the Revolution constituted a complete break with the traditions of the past; it cleared out the very last vestiges of feudalism, and created in the *Code Civil* a masterly adaptation of the old Roman law—that almost perfect expression of the juridical relations corresponding to the economic stage called by Marx the production of commodities—to modern capitalist conditions; so masterly that this French revolutionary code still serves as a model for reforms of the law of property in all other countries [including Ethiopia], not excepting England (Engels, 1968c: 391).

This does not, however, mean that English law is feudal or semi-feudal.

Let us, however, not forget that if English law continues to express the economic relations of capitalist society in that barbarous feudal language which corresponds to the thing expressed, just as English spelling corresponds to English pronunciation . . . that same English law is the only one which has preserved through ages, and transmitted to America and the colonies, the best part of that old Germanic personal freedom, local self-government and independence from all interference but that of the law courts which on the Continent has been lost during the period of absolute monarchy, and has nowhere been as yet fully recovered (Engels, 1968c: 391–92).

Engels's point here is critical. The idea that the juridical "super-structure" of bourgeois relations of production can take the *form* of feudal language and yet work in perfect symbiosis not only in Great Britain, which had a feudal past, but also in America, which did not, is a powerful argument for not seeing *feudalism* or feudal remnants simply because juridical relations take the "barbarous feudal language" as their expression of capitalist relations. It is as clear as not taking Apartheid and Nazism, which are the "negations" of the bourgeois juridical notion of personal freedom, as being the same as the negation of capitalism itself. It is here that Wallerstein's argument that capitalism does not necessarily imply free labor but can take on various *historical* forms becomes correct.³³ And if unfree labor can indeed function perfectly well under capitalism there is no reason why juridical relations of unfreedom — like Apartheid and Nazism — cannot be legal expressions of the capitalist system. One of the fundamental flaws in the argument of "bourgeois revolution" is that it assumes, quite wrongly, that bourgeois revolutions clear the path for the realization of the "principles" of the Enlightenment — liberty, freedom, fraternity, rule of law — etc. When these cherished ideals fail to materialize, as they did in *most* cases, they are taken to be exceptions, anomalies, distortions, etc. The historical-idealist nature of the methodology of these kinds of arguments is quite clear. We know capitalism only in *one* way — through its *historical* becoming. Everything else is pure ideal-type and "model" building.

That the "betrayal" of the bourgeoisie, historical-idealist conception, took place during the English revolution, "The compromise of 1689" (1968: 390), as Engels called it, and not with Prussia, that the "bourgeoisie" and aristocracy were not that deadly of enemies after all, was quite common-place knowledge in Engels's and Marx's writing. Engels noted:

What should the British bourgeois do without his aristocracy, that taught him manners, such as they were, and invented fashions for him — that furnished officers of the army, which kept order at home, and the navy, which conquered colonial possessions and new markets abroad? There was indeed a progressive minority of the bourgeoisie, that minority whose interests were not so well attended to under the compromise; this section, composed chiefly of the less wealthy middle class, did sym-

pathize with the Revolution, but it was powerless in Parliament (1968c: 392).

And this was a bourgeois revolution *against* the aristocracy, the latter identified as feudal? Lawrence Stone, who knows about the English aristocracy more than many an expert, commented that:

The notion that ever since the seventeenth century England has been a nation of shopkeepers inspired by the ethics of the market place and led by a capitalist bourgeoisie is one that dies very hard. In fact, as late as 1870 England was *basically* aristocratic in tone, taking its moral standards, its hierarchy of social values, and its political system from the landed classes (1965: 21; emphasis added).

That “aristocratic in tone” and “landed classes” do not mean feudal or feudal survivals is quite discernible from Stone’s tome. Engels concurs with Stone’s observation:

The new starting-point [of the “Glorious Revolution”] was a compromise between the rising middle class and the *ex-feudal landowners*. The latter, though called, *as now* [i.e., 1892], the aristocracy, had been long since on the way which led them to become what Louis Philippe in France became at a much later period, “the first bourgeois of the kingdom.” Fortunately for England, the old feudal barons had killed off one another during the War of the Roses. Their successors, though mostly scions of the old families, had been so much out of the direct line of descent that they constituted quite a new body, with habits and tendencies far more bourgeois than feudal. They fully understood the value of money, and at once began to increase their rents by turning hundreds of small farmers out and replacing them by sheep. Henry VIII, while squandering the Church lands, created fresh *bourgeois landlords* by wholesale; the innumerable confiscations of estates; regranted to absolute or relative upstarts, and continued during the *whole* of the seventeenth century, had the same result. Consequently, *ever since Henry VII*, the English “aristocracy” [N.B., the quotation marks for aristocracy], far from counteracting the development of *industrial production*, had, on the contrary, sought to indirectly profit

thereby; and there had always been a section of the great landowners willing, from economical or political reasons, to cooperate with the leading men of the financial and industrial bourgeoisie. The compromise of 1689 was, therefore, easily accomplished. . . . *There might be squabbles about matters of detail, but, on the whole, the aristocratic oligarchy knew too well that its own economic prosperity was irretrievably bound up with that of the industrial and commercial middle class* (1968c: 389–90; emphasis added).³⁴

Engels, thus far. How can one demythologize the myth of *feudal* aristocracy being a hindrance, an obstacle, a “fetter” for the development of capitalist productive forces, which, therefore, necessitated a “bourgeois revolution” so that a wide avenue for the automobile of capitalism is cleared of feudal barricades better than Engels did? “Ever since Henry VII”—that is, “of course,” long *before* the English bourgeois revolution—the English “aristocracy” was not an aristocracy! So what was the target of the “bourgeois revolution”? Just the monarch, Charles I, who was the first English monarch to be executed *in public*, which, some would argue, is itself a sign that the revolution was bourgeois? Not only were the landed aristocracy bourgeois landlords, ex-feudal landowners, not only did they benefit from capitalist development, but also, and this is the key to the whole argument, they were *not* a “fetter,” a hindrance, an obstacle to the development of *industrial production*. Since many Marxists love the term “industrial production,” Engels said that the landed aristocracy was in such a position that “its own economic prosperity was irretrievably bound up with that of the industrial and commercial middle class.” Alas, are there still people around who talk of the theory of “bourgeois revolution” in which the bourgeoisie overthrew the *feudal* aristocracy, “seized state power” after, and as a result, capitalism developed by leaps and bounds, unfettered by “feudal barbarism”?

The catch for the rather commonplace label, “feudal,” attached to the aristocracy in England had a lot to do with two confusions: (1) The historical origin of the aristocracy, which was feudal, is confused with the continuous use of the same title, “aristocracy,” long after the demise of feudalism; and it is assumed that *if aristocracy then feudal*, an argument that may make more sense in formal logical syllogism than in historical relations. And we know quite well that one can make a per-

fect formal logical syllogism based on historically unfounded premises. The continued existence of the aristocracy, long after the “bourgeois revolution,” is supposedly due to “cultural continuity,” or in quasi-Marxist jargon, due to the “law” of the superstructure and ideology lagging behind economic development, the non-correspondence of the “superstructure” with the economic “base.” (2) The second confusion is that of *class* with *status*, or to use the shibboleth of Althusserian Marxism, which was also used by Engels, class with “fraction of class.” In the case of the aristocracy, language is playing tricks with us. We are using the same term “aristocracy” for radically different historical relations. Under feudalism, the aristocracy was a “fraction” of the feudal landed nobility class. Under capitalism, the aristocracy is a “fraction” of the bourgeois class; it is a *status* symbol associated with *styles of life* rather than with a different economic system opposed to and in contrast with capitalism. Lawrence Stone discussed the difference and relation between *class* and *status*, as far as the English aristocracy was concerned, as follows:

The peerage in 1640 was a landed aristocracy increasingly devoted to money-making, infiltrated partly by a *capitalist bourgeoisie obsessed with aristocratic pretensions*, and partly by jumped-up lesser nobility who owed their elevation to political favor but some of whom had failed to extract from the Crown the favour of a great landed estate with which to endow their successors. Unattractive though it may be to those with romantic illusions about rank and title, it has been the successful fusion of old blood, new wealth, and political careerism that has given the English peerage its remarkable capacity for survival over the past three centuries (1965: 59).³⁵

Hence, the aristocracy was bourgeois. But a few pages earlier, Stone had this to say:

The notion that ever since the seventeenth century England has been a nation of shopkeepers [so said once Napoleon] inspired by the ethics of the market-place and led by a capitalist bourgeoisie is one that dies very hard. In fact as late as 1870 England was *basically aristocratic in tone*, taking its moral standards,

its hierarchy of social values, and its political system from the *landed classes* (1965: 21; emphasis added).

Is this not contradictory to the previous statement? Of course not. “Basically aristocratic in tone” and “landed classes” do not mean feudal; only a fool can think so. What we have in Stone’s argument is what we can make into a clear distinction between bourgeois *class*, including both the “aristocracy” and bourgeoisie “proper,” and a “fraction” of this class being aristocratic. Simply put: what we are dealing with is the *bourgeoisification of the aristocracy* and the *aristocratization of the bourgeoisie*. The former we call *class*; the latter we call *status*. Status *within the same class*, of course.³⁶

Moreover, origin should not trick us either. The origin of women’s oppression should not be confused with its conditions under capitalism where it assumes the form of particular *historical* relations. Otherwise, we would have a “history” of male domination all the way from the “primitive tribes” of the Baruya of New Guinea to the Oval office of the White House as one long chain of “patriarchy”! It is of critical importance to undertake *historically* “determinate” analysis of social relations which show qualitative variations, and yet may share the same terminology.³⁷ Wallerstein, for example, seems to restrict the very term “sexism,” alongside racism, to the history of the capitalist world-system *only*, thereby defining the historical boundary of “male” domination under capitalism (1984: 103).

Christopher Hill, who knows seventeenth-century England very well, attempted to tackle the thorny issue of bourgeois revolutions in general, and the English revolution in particular. He noted that:

The English Revolution, like all revolutions, was caused by the breakdown of the old society; it was brought about neither by the wishes of the bourgeoisie, nor by the leaders of the Long Parliament. But its *outcome* was the establishment of conditions far more favorable to the development of capitalism than those which prevailed before 1640. The hypothesis that this outcome, and the Revolution itself, were made possible by the fact that there had already been a considerable development of capitalist relations in England, but that it was the structures, fractures, and pressures of the society, rather than the wishes of leaders,

which dictated the outbreak of revolution and shaped the state which emerged from it (1986a: III, 95–96).

Even vehement opponents of the theory of “bourgeois revolution” would hardly find this argument of Hill unacceptable. After describing the various crises that led to the revolution, Hill commented:

To say that this situation was the ultimate consequence of stresses and strains produced by the rise of the capitalist mode of production is not to say that Charles I’s government was overthrown by a gang of capitalists—it was not—nor that a more skillful policy could not have enabled it to survive longer—it could (1986a: III, 96).

So far so good. Then “suddenly” he “decides” to attack Lawrence Stone’s article, “The Bourgeois Revolution Revisited,” published in *Past and Present*, No. 109. He wrote:

L. Stone thought he had shown that what happened in mid-seventeenth century England could not have been a bourgeois revolution because some royalists were enclosing landlords and some merchants were royalists. He should have added that Karl Marx was a bourgeois intellectual, Engels a factory owner and Lenin an aristocrat, thus proving that Marxism does not exist either (Hill, 1986a: III, 97).

Other than its cantankerous motive, the analogy is banal. After all, it was Lenin himself who, in his famous *What Is To Be Done?*, said that in their *social position*, Marx and Engels were *bourgeois* intellectuals. But from this *sociological* perception to make an existential conclusion that, therefore, Marxism does not exist is absurd. Moreover, and this is even more important, since the discussion is on revolution and class struggle, Marx-Engels-Lenin crossed over their respective *class* background to the other side of the barricade. Did the gentry and aristocracy do that? Stone’s answer is quite simple: the barricade was not divided between aristocrats and gentry on the one side, and bourgeois on the other, simply because *all* were bourgeois with differences only of *sources* of income like land, banking, industry, etc. The actual *class* struggle was between the bourgeoisie on the one hand and the “people”—levellers, diggers, etc.—on the other.³⁸ Hill observed that,

“without the pressures of the radicals the civil war might not have been transformed into a revolution: some compromise could have been botched up between the gentry on the two sides—a ‘Prussian path,’” (1986a: III, 115). A few pages later, Hill himself said that:

In every country there were long-standing rivalries *within the ruling gentry*, which often meant that if one family chose to support Parliament, another almost automatically chose to support the King. . . . But the *national alignments in the civil war were the sum of alignments in individual counties*: it was because the traditional structures and the traditional consensus had broken down in the localities that civil war could not be avoided (1986a: III, 108; emphases added).

Intra-gentry struggles led to civil war. Marvelous. Where is the bourgeoisie? Hill wrote:

The Marxist concept of bourgeois revolution is thus not refuted by demonstrating the House of Commons of the Long Parliament, like its predecessors, contained a cross-section of the natural rulers of the countryside, any more than the concept of bourgeois revolution would be established if it could be shown that every M.P. was a factory owner. To say that there was a division between court and country, though true, does not get us much further than saying that the French Revolution started with a revolt of the nobility. *What mattered in the English Revolution was that the ruling class was deeply divided at a time when there was much combustible material among the lower classes normally excluded from politics* (1986a: III, 107; emphasis added).

Things are getting a little clearer. Again, Hill focuses on the *internal fights among members of the ruling class*, not caring whether all of them were either factory owners or country gentlemen. The clearest and most logical explanation of the alignment of social forces during the English revolution is made by Hill as follows:

The oligarchies of the great merchant companies were alternatively “burdened and protected” by the crown, but *on balance protection in their privileges against interlopers outweighed resentment of the burdens* [emphasis added]. It was the price to be paid for work-

ing an unsatisfactory system. By the same token, merchants and industrialists *excluded* [emphasis original] from *monopoly privileges* [emphasis added] were always potential enemies of the crown that gave privileges to their rivals, though they might be open to offers. *What was new in the early sixteen-forties was that the royal government could no longer protect the privileges of its favourites* [emphasis added]; that customs farmers and monopolists were isolated from the rest of the business community and wide open to attack from London citizens who protected the Five Members from Charles I's attempted coup. But this was in a revolutionary situation (1986a: III, 111).

Hill cannot argue better to demolish his own theory of the English "bourgeois revolution." A Crown, the Absolutism of Anderson, that protects the "monopoly privileges" of the "oligarchies of the great merchant companies," which by any logic of imagination can't be anything but bourgeois, could not protect their interests anymore, due to inefficiency among other reasons, and left them open and easy targets to non-monopoly bourgeoisie and the "ordinary" citizen. This is counter to every logic of a bourgeois revolution. This sounds like a popular revolution *against* the big monopoly bourgeoisie by the "little guys." Wait a minute. Perhaps we are too quick to conclude: no bourgeois revolution. Did not Marx say that the bourgeois revolution in "Germany" has to be made *against* the bourgeoisie? Yes, *but* because he *assumed* that the English revolution was made by the bourgeoisie! (Marx, 1971a: 460). What about Lenin who said that the Russian *bourgeois* revolution has to be carried out by the proletariat *against* the bourgeoisie, but in the interests of the latter, thereby making a transubstantiation of "historical missions" from one class to the other? And yet, when the actual revolution came in 1917, Lenin said: forward to the *socialist* revolution, i.e., a revolution against the bourgeoisie, but this time the bourgeoisie was the peasantry!

Like a person suffering from love affairs and yet unable to break away from them, Hill seems to be unable to extricate himself from the notion of the English revolution as "bourgeois revolution" although *his own* writing is telling him so. This is the shaky and swampy ground upon which he stands.

Hill wrote:

[To classify] the English and French Revolutions, and the Russian Revolution of 1905, as bourgeois revolutions does not mean that they are to be forced into one mould. There are, it seems to me, interesting analogies [!!], but the English gentry and merchants of the seventeenth century were *very different* from the leaders of the French *Tiers Etat*, faced by a highly privileged *noblesse* and a state machine permeated by the purchase of office; and both were *very different* from the timid Russian merchants and manufacturers, dependent on foreigners for ideas no less than for capital. As Marx recognized, the English gentry became a bourgeoisie of its own particular kind. It continued to exploit its tenantry through manor courts, to use money as a source of political power as well as of capital. To recognize its dependence on capitalist relations of production is not to deny the specific way in which it adapted the institutions of the old society, from Parliament and common law downward, to its own need (1986a: III, 113; emphases added).³⁹

Despite Hill's own argument that the English, French and Russian bourgeoisie were "very" different from one another, despite his own argument that what the three have in common is "interesting analogies," and not much more, despite his own qualification that the three cases should not be "forced into one mould"—despite all these arguments of his own—he still insists on talking about "bourgeois revolution." What is this if not putting the three cases "into one mould"? Interestingly enough, Hill does not deal with the *essential similarities* of the three cases, out of which marginal differences can be ignored as peripheral, without which the *concept* of bourgeois revolution becomes meaningless when applied to the three cases.

In no capitalist state in the world today, so far as I am aware, is state power exercised directly by big businessmen. There are close links between government and business, but a Henry Ford or a J. D. Rockefeller has better things to do than attend to the details of administration. So it was in the years after 1649 (1986a: III, 113).

We concur. Then comes the admission of problems.

“Bourgeois revolution” is an unfortunate phrase [!!] if it suggests a revolution *willed* [??] by the bourgeoisie, as “the Puritan Revolution” suggests a revolution made by Puritans to achieve Puritan ends. Perhaps a better analogy is the scientific revolution, to which contributions were made by many who were most “unscientific” by the standards of the science which emerged from the revolution. Boyle and Newton took alchemy seriously, Locke and Newton were millenarians (Hill, 1986a: III, 113–14).

Another analogy, scientific revolution, a better one, and yet a more confusing one. Better, because the scientific revolution was a long *process* that can hardly be given a date. More confusing, because it is difficult to say who was the Newton of the bourgeois revolution. Cromwell, Gerard Winstanley, or John Lilburne? Robespierre, Napoleon, or Blanqui? Lenin, Stolypin, or Tsar Alexander II? *Or*, all of the above? Why use the “unfortunate phrase” when it is possible to have a fortunate one—just drop the concept “bourgeois revolution” altogether!

Christopher Hill, the most widely-acclaimed British Marxist historian of seventeenth-century England, is as confusing as the lay fellow-traveler when it comes to the question of “bourgeois revolutions.” Hence the attempts of “experts,” who are however “inferior” in their scholarly knowledge of seventeenth-century England to Hill. One of them is Maurice Dobb.

Dobb describes the English revolution as a struggle between yeoman *kulaks* and the big merchant bourgeoisie, the latter siding with the monarchy. And since by its “nature,” merchant capital is conservative and an obstacle to the development of productive forces, the *kulaks* fought against it. It was, in simplified language, a struggle between *production* and *circulation*, the former represented by kulaks, the latter by merchant capital (Dobb, 1978: 64–65).⁴⁰ The English revolution was hence what Marx called the “really revolutionary” path of transition to capitalism, as opposed to the rather conservative one. These two “paths” of transition to capitalism are:

The transition from the feudal mode of production is two-fold. The producer becomes merchant and capitalist, *in contrast to the natural agricultural economy and the guild-bound handicrafts of the*

medieval urban industries. This is the really revolutionizing path. Or else, the merchant establishes direct sway over production. However much this serves historically as a stepping-stone—witness the English 17th-century clothier, who brings the weavers, independent as they are, under his control by selling their wool to them and buying their cloth—it cannot by itself contribute to the overthrow of the old mode of production, but tends to preserve it as its precondition. . . . This system presents everywhere an obstacle to the real capitalist mode of production and goes under with its development. Without revolutionizing the mode of production, it only worsens the condition of the direct producers, turns them into mere wage-workers and proletarians under conditions worse than those under the immediate control of capital, and appropriates their surplus-labour on the basis of the old mode of production (Marx, 1977: III, 334–35; emphasis added).

And what does this discussion of Marx have to do with the English revolution? Well, in Dobb's theory the English revolution was a bourgeois revolution of path I of capitalist development fought against path II, as a result of which England became the first nation to undergo the Industrial Revolution. Now we know that what Marx called the "real capitalist mode of production" is *machinofacture* as opposed to *manufacture*, and we also know that the former replaced the latter *after* the Industrial Revolution. We also know that the former is called by Marx the "real subsumption of labor by capital," as opposed to the latter, which is the "formal subsumption of labor by capital." We know still more: We know that in the former case we have "absolute surplus-value," in the latter "relative surplus-value." We know all this from Marx. What we do not know is what all this has to do with "bourgeois revolutions" in general, and the English "bourgeois revolution" in particular? Of course, it is quite easy to say that the English "bourgeois revolution" *led to* the Industrial Revolution since the latter came *after* the former, but this is an argument of *time sequence* and not of *relations*. After all, did not the merchant-industrialist path to capitalism also "lead" to other Industrial Revolutions, mainly in Germany and Japan? If so, why link the English revolution with the Industrial Revolution causally?

In all of these arguments by Dobb, not a single word is uttered

about the global division of labor, as if Great Britain were a mere modern parish run by parochial-minded kulaks.

In the midst of all these turmoils came a certain Takahashi, defending the “specificity” of capitalist transition, not just in England, but in “western Europe!”

These revolutions in Western Europe, by the independence and the ascent of the petty commodity producers and their differentiation, set free from among them the forces making — as it were *economically* — for the development of capitalist production; while in Prussia and Japan this “emancipation” was carried out in the opposite sense. The organization of feudal land property remained intact and the classes of free and independent peasants and middle-class burghers were undeveloped. The bourgeois “reforms” . . . contain such contrary elements as the legal sanctioning of the position of the Junker’s land property and parasite land proprietorship of semi-feudal character. Since capitalism had to be erected on this kind of soil, on a basis of fusion rather than conflict with absolutism, the formation of capitalism took place in the opposite way to Western Europe, predominantly as a process of transformation of putting-out merchant capital into industrial capital. The socio-economic conditions for the establishment of modern democracy were not present; on the contrary capitalism had to make its way within an oligarchic system — the “organic” social structure — designed to suppress bourgeois liberalism. Thus it was not the internal development itself of those societies that brought about the necessity of “bourgeois” revolution; the need for reforms rather came about as the result of external circumstances. It can be said that in connection with varying world conditions the phase of establishing capitalism takes different basic lines: in Western Europe, Way No. I (producer-merchant), in Eastern Europe and Asia, Way No. II (merchant-manufacturer) (1978: 96).

So we have it all here: the best of Barrington Moore, Jr. and the worst of Perry Anderson in one jar! Why Germany and Japan could not have democracy was because their transition to capitalism was via Way II! How about this: that the “socio-economic conditions” for the establishment of modern democracy did not exist in Germany because,

as a weak and newcomer state, the German bourgeoisie, unlike its English and French counterparts, did not have huge colonial possessions out of which they could extract huge surplus, part of which is used for buying off and improving the standards of living of the working class in the core, which in turn laid down the material conditions for political democracy? Too “Third Worldist”? The quite commonplace Marxist distinction always made between England and France in terms of landed property and class structure—Brenner said they had a “very different sort of class structure”: in the former sheep eating “men,” in the latter peasants owning their piece of land—disappears in Takahashi’s “Western Europe.” What about the compromise of 1689 as opposed to the “classic bourgeois revolution” of 1789? What about Marx’s whole theory of Bonapartism—that the French peasants are its solid foundation? How does this fit into modern democracy in western Europe? How about the fact that nineteenth-century France was more despotic than democratic? Takahashi’s entire argument is nothing but modernization theory waving a red flag. It shows us how deeply the liberal ideology has penetrated even shrewd, intelligent Marxists like Takahashi. As to Path I and Path II in the transition to capitalism, as far as England was concerned, *both* “paths” took place. Yeoman farmers became “productive” bourgeois—Path I. Merchants became “productive” bourgeois—Path II. And ex-feudal landowners committed class suicide and became “productive” bourgeoisie, sheep eating “men.” Shall we call this Path III? Lenin called this “path” the “Prussian path,” but it is not the same thing as Marx’s Path II. In Lenin, “Prussian” versus “American” paths are two different paths to *agricultural* capitalism. In Marx, his two paths are differences between *producers* and *merchants*. Takahashi confused Marx with Lenin by fusing them. By confusing a *conceptual* distinction made by Marx between Path I and Path II with *real* historical variations in capitalist development, some Marxists came to resemble the liberal stock-in-tradespeople. And when they link the existence of democracy to the two different “paths,” they at last drop the red flag and wave the grey one.

The “theoretical space” of the discussion on the two-way transition was “closed” by Lenin. But Lenin’s two paths are different from Marx’s. These two paths of capitalist development are the Prussian path and the American path. In the first path, “feudal landlord economy slowly evolves into bourgeois, Junker landlord economy, which condemns the

peasants to decades of the most harrowing expropriation and bondage." In the second path, "there is no landlord economy, or else it is broken up by revolution, which confiscates and splits up the feudal estates" (Lenin, 1964a: XIII, 243). The first path leads to Junker capitalism, the second to peasant capitalism. Then comes Lenin's great error.

To facilitate the development of the productive forces (this highest criterion of social progress) we must support not bourgeois evolution of the landlord type, but bourgeois evolution of the peasant type. The former implies the utmost preservation of bondage and serfdom (remodeled on bourgeois lines), the *least* rapid development of productive forces, and the *retarded* development of capitalism. . . . The second type implies the *most* rapid development of the productive forces and the best possible (under commodity production) conditions of existence for the mass of the peasantry (Lenin, 1964a: XIII, 243–48; emphases added).

Lenin's error is that his discussion of "least" and "most" development of capitalist productive forces simply does not fit into the Prussian and American categories. America proper, the U.S., is as we discussed earlier, a different case altogether, and Lenin's use of the term "American" is confusing. He should have said "French," maybe. Nevertheless, once America is out, it has been historically the case that *the Prussian path actually "led" to the fastest development of capitalist productive forces in the shortest possible time*, while the "French path" "led" to a relatively stagnant development of capitalist productive forces. Simply "compare" France after the "great bourgeois revolution" with Bismarckian and post-Bismarckian Germany. England was obviously *closer* to the Prussian than to the "French model." The compromise of 1689 simply does not make sense without this. As to the "best possible conditions of existence for the mass of peasantry," Lenin is correct to put it in the "French" category, not because it is the fastest development of capitalist productive forces, but rather the opposite. After all, is it not obvious that the faster capitalism develops, the faster the peasantry disappears? But this happened faster in the Prussian than the French path. Like "aristocracy," the term "peasant" is playing tricks with us. Alas, the Chinese communists talk of "peasants" during the Communes period!

Lenin, whom Stalin said was “born for revolution,” wrote of “bourgeois revolution” as follows:

Marxists are absolutely convinced of the bourgeois character of the Russian revolution [of 1905]. What does it mean? It means that the democratic reforms in the political system, and the social and economic reforms that have become a necessity for Russia, do not in themselves imply the undermining of capitalism, the undermining of bourgeois rule; on the contrary, they will, for the first time, make it possible for the bourgeoisie to rule as a class. The Socialist-Revolutionaries cannot grasp this idea, for they do not know the ABC of the laws of development of commodity and capitalist production; they fail to see that even the complete success of a peasant insurrection, even the redistribution of the whole of the land in favour of the peasants in accordance with their desires . . . will not destroy capitalism at all, but will, on the contrary, give an impetus to its development and hasten the class disintegration on the peasantry (1964d: IX, 48).

A bourgeois revolution is one that makes capitalist development faster, deeper, stronger.

A bourgeois revolution is a revolution which does not depart from the framework of the bourgeois, i.e. capitalist, socio-economic system. A bourgeois revolution expresses the needs of capitalist development, and, far from destroying the foundations of capitalism, it effects the contrary—it broadens and deepens them (Lenin, 1964d: IX, 49).

In both citations, see the negative nature of the argument: “does not depart,” “do not in themselves imply the undermining of capitalism,” etc. If bourgeois revolution “expresses the needs of capitalist development” it does not necessarily follow, either logically or historically, that the inverse is necessary too, i.e., that capitalist development needs bourgeois revolution. Or else, what we will have is a situation where capitalist development is expressed by bourgeois revolutions, i.e., wherever capitalist development has taken place, there has been bourgeois revolutions, a bitter pill to swallow for proponents of “bourgeois revolution.”

Lenin's arguments were made in 1905 when the idea of a proletarian-led bourgeois revolution directed in the interests of and yet *against* the bourgeoisie was the commonplace Bolshevik strategy including Trotsky's idea of Permanent Revolution.⁴¹ The 1905–1907 “bourgeois revolution” was “defeated.” When the second edition of the “bourgeois revolution” came in February 1917, Lenin had by then changed his *entire* strategy of the revolution. He attacked the “Old Bolsheviks,” who stood firm to his own 1905 schema, as outdated and dogmatic and wrote:

The old tsarist power, which represented only a handful of feudal landowners who commanded the entire state machinery (the army, the police, and the bureaucracy), has been overthrown and removed, but not completely destroyed. The monarchy has not been formally abolished; the Romanov gang continues to hatch monarchist intrigues. The vast landed possessions of the feudalist squirearchy have not been abolished.

State power in Russia has passed into the hands of a new *class*, namely, the bourgeoisie and landowners who had become bourgeois. *To this extent* the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia is completed (Lenin, 1964c: XXV, 57).

This is an *extremely* interesting perception on “bourgeois revolution.” Just look at the first paragraph, and compare it with the second. State power has passed to a new class, the bourgeoisie, which is the pinnacle of a bourgeois revolution, *although* the state bureaucracy is still monarchist, and *although* “feudal” landed property is still left undisturbed. Lenin is making a distinction between *political* revolution—the bourgeoisie has “come to power”—and a social-economic one—transformation of landed property, state bureaucracy, etc. The point is that *all* “bourgeois revolutions” have done the same thing—political “reforms,” but not too many reforms. Hence Lenin's caution:

If you want to talk of “*revolutionary*” democracy, then you must distinguish this concept from *reformist* democracy under a capitalist Ministry, because it is high time to stop talking about “revolutionary democracy,” handing out mutual congratulations on “revolutionary democracy,” and get on with a *class* definition. . . . It is being proposed that we should pass to reformist democracy under a capitalist Ministry. That may be all well

and good from the standpoint of the usual West-European models (1964b: XXV, 20).

Hence the motto, "All power to the Soviets." But "Soviet power" means the *negation* of capitalism, for which the bourgeois revolution was meant to clear the path. It means a new social order—socialism. The failure of Soviet power and the continued reproduction of bureaucratic domination half defeats socialism.

The illusionary nature of the concept of "bourgeois revolution" sweeping away the political, not to mention the economic, state structure of "feudal" Absolutism is nowhere clearer than in the U.S.S.R. where not *one*, but *two*, revolutions—bourgeois and socialist, separated from each other by a period of only eight months in 1917—did *not* bring about the destruction of the Tsarist state *apparatus*. Four years after the October revolution, Lenin was not sure whether the monster of the inherited state apparatus was to devour the revolution, or vice versa. The "bureaucratic degeneration" of the revolution was no "degeneration" at all. It simply shows the *continued* strength of the state bureaucracy as an *institution*, based on the "hierarchical division of labor" (Arrighi & Hopkins, 1987: 39), and the continuing strength of Weber's theory of bureaucracy: Once a bureaucratic state structure is firmly entrenched, it is the hardest to dismantle! The same monster is today the nightmare of Perestroika!⁴²

The clearest and most concise *definition* of "bourgeois revolution" anywhere to be found is in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*. There, "bourgeois revolution" is defined as:

A social revolution whose main task is the destruction of the feudal system or its vestiges, the establishment of the rule of the bourgeoisie, and the creation of a bourgeois state; in dependent and colonial countries the bourgeois revolution also aims at the attainment of national independence (Drabkin & Porshnev, 1974: 44).

The first part of the sentence before the semi-colon is for the "bourgeois revolutions" of Europe; the second part is for the "Third World," and also, perhaps, for the American colonies, etc. "At a certain stage a bourgeois revolution is historically necessary and progressive, as it expresses the needs of society's development" (Drabkin & Porshnev, 1974: 44).

The most frequent cause of bourgeois revolution is a conflict between the new productive forces that develop within the womb of the feudal system and feudal productive relations (or their vestiges and survivals), as well as feudal institutions; however, this conflict is often masked by political and ideological contradictions. But even in cases of a bourgeois revolution caused by foreign oppression [as in 1776 America?] or in the desire to unify the country [as in Garibaldian "Italy"?] the pressing need to eliminate the feudal system or its vestiges plays a decisive role (Drabkin & Porshnev, 1974: 44).

So, in the American "bourgeois revolution" of 1776, which emanated from "foreign oppression," the pressing need to eliminate the feudal system or its vestiges played a "decisive role"! Let anyone who can make sense out of this try! It is an elementary principle of logical thinking that a *theory*, a *concept*, which is meant to explain universal relations within its terms of discourse, should leave no loopholes for *exceptions* for the simple reason that the exception proves the rule by testing it. The American revolution is one such "exception." One could find even more "exceptions," but one "exception" is enough to destroy a theory.

In the epoch of imperialism the bourgeoisie in the more or less developed capitalist countries becomes counter-revolutionary out of fear of the proletariat, which threatens its rule. . . .

In colonial and dependent countries the national bourgeoisie can still play a progressive and even revolutionary role, even in the epoch of imperialism, especially if a struggle against foreign imperialism is underway (Drabkin & Porshnev, 1974: 45).

This was exactly the same "advice" given to the Chinese Communists by Stalin, to ally with the "revolutionary national bourgeoisie" organized as the Kuomintang and led by Sun Yat-Sen and Chiang Kai-Shek. When Chiang Kai-Shek struck with an iron fist against the Communists, it was said that the *comprador* bourgeoisie did it!! Moreover, what does it mean to say that "In the epoch of imperialism the bourgeoisie in the more or less developed capitalist countries becomes counter-revolutionary out of fear of the proletariat"? In relation to what revolution? In relation to "bourgeois revolutions"? Well, have not the "bourgeois revolutions" already taken place a long time ago in the "more

or less developed capitalist countries?" In relation to proletarian revolutions? Alas, what else can the bourgeoisie be, be it in Mali or Japan, be it during "free competition," "pre-imperialism," or monopoly imperialism, but out-and-out counter-revolutionary against the proletarian revolution? The catch is the historically unfounded thesis that during pre-imperialist capitalism, the bourgeoisie in the "West" was revolutionary and progressive, but in the "epoch of imperialism" it became counter-revolutionary and reactionary. It passed its card of pre-imperialist radicalism to its "Third World" counterpart!

The supposedly "progressive" and "even revolutionary" role of the national bourgeoisie remains a mystery if what makes the bourgeoisie of the advanced capitalist countries counter-revolutionary is "fear of the proletariat, which threatens its rule." Does not the proletariat of the "dependent" countries threaten the rule of the "national bourgeoisie"? Is it not the case *historically* that the proletariat of the "dependent" countries has "threatened" the rule of the bourgeoisie more than the proletariat of the developed capitalist countries? Is it not the case that the "national bourgeoisie" in the "dependent" countries is much less secure in its rule than those of the advanced capitalist countries' bourgeoisie? What else explains the normality of military dictatorships than lack of class security on the part of the "national bourgeoisie"? Did not the "national bourgeoisie" also "betray" its "historical mission" and side with the counter-revolution? The theory of a "progressive" and "even revolutionary" national bourgeoisie may help explain the love affairs between the Soviet state and the Indian bourgeoisie, for example. But it hardly explains history, for it is based on false historical grounds.

The discussion on the theory of "bourgeois revolution" cannot be "complete" without taking the views of one of its greatest proponents, Albert Soboul. For Soboul, the French Revolution, the "classic bourgeois revolution," as he calls it, was a revolution directed against the feudal aristocracy—it abolished feudalism in France, and cleared the way for capitalist development, a very similar picture to the one given in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*.

The aristocracy of the Old Regime had been stripped of its privileges and social preponderance; feudal society had been destroyed. By wiping out every vestige of feudalism, by freeing the peasants from seignioral dues and ecclesiastical tithes . . . ,

by abolishing privileged corporations and their monopolies, and by unifying the national market, the French Revolution marked a decisive stage in the transition from feudalism to capitalism (Soboul, 1977: 154).

And yet, despite its “classic” character, despite its being a “model” of “real bourgeois revolution” that abolished feudalism and freed the “peasants,” “experts” tell us a different story:

It is a clear-cut fact about the French Revolution that, despite the crucial contribution of peasant revolts to its success, there was very little redistribution of land ownership as such. Only about 10 percent of the land, confiscated from the Church and from some emigres, changed hands in the Revolution. And no more than half of that went to peasants. Besides, recipients of confiscated lands had to purchase them from revolutionary governments hard-pressed for resources, and this requirement effectively barred the poorer peasants from acquiring new lands (Skocpol, 1979: 126).

So much for the “classic bourgeois revolution” — only 5 % of the land changed hands to the peasants as a result of the revolution, and even for this the peasants had to pay. What about the remaining 95 %? Did it still remain “feudal?”

Then comes Soboul’s theory of the social forces of the “classic bourgeois revolution.”

The *vanguard* of the revolution was not the commercial bourgeoisie; since it remained wedded to its mercantile, intermediary role, it tended to come to terms with the old social system and, from 1789 to 1793, it generally favored compromise. The *real force* behind the Revolution was the mass of direct petty producers, whose surplus labor or production had been appropriated by the feudal aristocracy through the juridical system or the state mechanisms of enforcement under the Old Regime. It was the revolt of these petty producers, craftsmen or peasants, that dealt the gravest blows against the old order of society (Soboul, 1977: 154–55; emphasis added).

Why were these “little guys” against the “big” ones? Soboul has the answer:

Hunger was the bond that held together such varied groups as artisans, shopkeepers, journeymen, and day laborers, giving them a common hostility to *big merchants, entrepreneurs, and hoarders of grain, whether noble or bourgeois* (1977: 154–55; emphasis added).

Now, big merchants and entrepreneurs are obviously bourgeois, and what held the “common people,” the Sans-Culottes, together was hunger. Georges Lefebvre said the same thing about the role of hunger in the revolution (1973: 29–33). Even more precisely, Soboul himself said, “hunger mobilized the people for the Revolution” (1977: 33). Then we have this:

The uprising of 14 July thus came at the highest point reached by prices over the entire eighteenth century. [As if by accidental harmonious convergence!]

The cost of living for the lower classes was seriously affected by the rise in food prices, since cereal prices rose more quickly than prices for any other commodity. On the eve of the Revolution, the cost of bread accounted for 58 percent of the budget of the lower classes as a result of the general increase, and in 1789 this figure rose to 88 percent, leaving only 12 percent for all other expenses. Yet while the mass of the people were crushed by rising prices, the better-off classes of society [both “feudal” and bourgeois, among others?] were hardly affected (Soboul, 1977: 32–33; emphasis added).

Beautiful. But does not this tell us that the revolution was after all a fight between the starving “poor” and the “rich,” the latter including entrepreneurs, as Soboul himself argued, and not between feudalism and the bourgeoisie? It is one of the most mind-boggling ironies of modern history that Marxists have been so caught up in the illusions of the bourgeoisie, some of which were intentionally fabricated, that it is sometimes quite difficult to tell who is speaking. Marxists have sung songs of eulogy to the bourgeoisie, burn incense in front of its global dominance, and called it progress, pushed it so far to the left that it makes the bourgeoisie itself shy and rather uncomfortable. It is ironical that in many places and many times the Marxists successfully out-bourgeois the bourgeoisie. And yet Russell Jacoby thinks all this is quite understandable: “If Marx was capitalism’s greatest critic,

he was its greatest admirer" (1981: 25). Well, we know that. After all, where is the bourgeoisie so eulogized, the "barbarians" so cursed, as much as in the *Communist Manifesto*?⁴³

The "poor" people fight, the bourgeoisie takes credit for the fight, and Marxists join the bourgeoisie, give them a theory they do not need, and baptize it as "Bourgeois Revolution!"

When the theory of "bourgeois revolution" reaches its logical *reductio ad absurdum*, we read this:

Feudalism had already been swept away in France by the revolution of 1789–94. But another bourgeois revolution became inevitable when the rapacious rule of the financial aristocracy, the top crust of the bourgeoisie, and the political monopoly it enjoyed began to hamper the further development of capitalism.

Unlike previous bourgeois revolutions, those of 1848 and 1849 took place when fundamental social contradictions had already developed within bourgeois society and when the proletariat had already entered the political arena (Vasilyeva, 1976: vii, xv).

The political and economic monopoly of the "financial aristocracy" became a "fetter" on the further development of capitalism six decades after the "classic bourgeois revolution"! We have the theory that monopoly is bad, free competition is good, a theory most identified with Lenin, here. The "irony" is that it is pushed dozens of years back in time. For Lenin, monopoly capitalism, imperialism, starts in 1900! Vasilyeva pushed it back to 1848!

The preposterous nature of the whole theory that "free competition" leads to further development of capitalism, monopoly hinders it, hence the former is good, the latter bad, is the most cumbersome load Marxists have taken from their liberal comrades-in-theory. That the very thesis "monopoly hinders" is so wrong historically is elementary. Is it not obvious that the development of capitalist productive forces has moved by leaps and bounds, shortening the gap of major inventions more, in the post-1900 period, the period Lenin said free competition was definitely replaced by monopoly, than *all* the centuries of "historical capitalism" prior to 1900 put together? Is it not obvious that the post Second World War era saw the fastest and deepest development of capitalist productive forces than the entire pre-1945 period?

What about Lenin's theory that "free competition" corresponds to democracy, i.e., free *economic* competition corresponds to free *political* competition, and "monopoly" corresponds to dictatorship and despotism? Again absurd, at least historically. Bourgeois democracy became "popular" *after*, not before, and under monopoly capitalism. It is not because of monopoly capitalism that there has been the extension of bourgeois democracy, but if one likes "correspondence" theories, then to say that monopoly capitalism corresponds to democracy makes more historical sense than the opposite.

In all this we are not concerned with whether capitalism has always been monopoly or not, whether free competition is an "intellectual construct which serves the same intellectual function as a frictionless movement, as a standard from which to measure the degree of deviation" or not (Wallerstein, 1979a: 149).⁴⁴ That Thatcher's Great Britain is much more bourgeois democratic than its Victorian counterpart, that Reaganite America is more bourgeois democratic than its nineteenth-century "free competitive" counterpart goes without saying. After all, women and Blacks were "allowed" to vote *during* monopoly capitalism. If there was Nazism in Germany, we should look for its coming-to-be elsewhere, not merely in the giant corporations.

Ironically enough, Vasilyeva does not seem to have noticed Engels's article, "From Paris to Berne," in the same volume seven. There he argues that the 1848 revolution in France was a class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in which the peasants took the sides of the bourgeoisie so much so that "the French proletariat, before it enforces its demands, will first have to put down a general peasants' war, a war which even the writing-off of all mortgage debts can only postpone for a short time" (Engels, 1977: VII, 523). Did not Engels and Marx say that by electing Louis Napoleon the French peasants "saved" France from the proletariat? Did not the French petty bourgeoisie clear the barricades to their shops put up by the proletariat, as Marx commented in his *Class Struggles in France*? When Marx summed it up, he said: the proletariat stood alone.

The distinction between *finance aristocracy* and *industrial bourgeoisie* was made in the *Class Struggles in France, 1848-1850*. The former included, "bankers, stock-exchange kings, railway kings, owners of coal and iron mines in forests, [and] a part of the landed proprietors associated with them" (Marx, 1971b: 155). This financial aristocracy "in its modes of

acquisition as well as in its pleasures, is nothing but the *rebirth of the lumpenproletariat on the heights of bourgeois society*" (Marx, 1971b: 157–58; emphasis added). Well, is this not what we saw Wallerstein say — that the bourgeoisie prefers to be aristocrat to being "bourgeois"? And the idea that this financial aristocracy becomes a "fetter" on the further development of capitalism, because it is "aristocratic," makes sense provided we can assume capitalism without banks, railways, coal and iron mines, landed property, forests, and the stock-exchange!

The conflict between the financial aristocracy and the industrial bourgeoisie, an intraclass conflict, was one of the causes of the 1848 revolution in France. "The second great economic event that hastened the outbreak of the revolution was a general commercial and industrial crisis in England" (Marx, 1971b: 158). Yes, *in England*: A crisis in England "caused" a revolution in France!! Criticizing the illusions of the French workers, Marx wrote:

Just as the workers thought they would be able to emancipate themselves side by side with the bourgeoisie, so they thought they would be able to consummate a proletarian revolution within the national walls of France, side by side the remaining bourgeois nations. But *French relations of production* [!!] are conditioned by the *foreign trade* of France, by her *position on the world market and the laws thereof*; how was France to break them without a revolutionary war, which would strike back at the *despot of the world market, England?* (1971: 162; emphases added).

One does not need more. Marx is discussing how a *proletarian* revolution in France cannot avoid a revolutionary war against the "despot of the world market," while one of the authors of a Preface to his and Engels's *Collected Works* is saying 1848 France was undergoing a second "bourgeois revolution"! If the 1848 revolution was indeed a bourgeois revolution, what was it directed against? The financial aristocracy, who obstructed the further development of capitalism??? Banks, railway lines, forests, mines — these become hindrances to further development of capitalism? Or, just their owners? It is "ironical" that Marxists think they "need" a theory of "bourgeois revolution," as if they need this for justifying or explaining the proletarian revolution. Well, after all, to have a precedent is not bad. It can be used as a footnote. Regis Debray is quoted in the July 18, 1988, *Newsweek*, in relation to the bicentenni-

al of the “classic bourgeois revolution,” saying that “the right does not want to celebrate revolution. It is our revolution, not theirs.” Of course, he is “left,” advising the “socialist” government of François Mitterand!

Marxists’ obsession of hatred for merchants, bankers, landlords, and their love for the “industrial production” bourgeoisie knows no limits. Supposedly, the former are “parasites,” the latter “hard working,” industrious heroes! The former are in “circulation,” the latter in “production.” As Marxists, they side with *production* against *circulation, exchange, and consumption*! And there are many “serious” people who argue thus!

By way of summation, we can make the following “theses” about “bourgeois revolutions.”

(1) If bourgeois revolution means a revolution that makes the conditions for the *further* development of capitalism much more conducive, then one can hardly be critical of the concept. *But*, there is one big “black” hole to be filled: the French revolution. Did capitalist development proceed faster in France due to the revolution or not? Paradoxical as it may seem, the French revolution *slowed* the tempo of capitalist development in France. The peasants, once freed from “feudal” residues, cling hard and fast to their parcel of land, become a center of “barbarism in the midst of civilization,” as Marx and Engels called them, and suffocate in the “idiocy of rural life” in which they form a mere “sack of potatoes.” True, *they were exploited by capital*, and yet they resisted the “encroachment” of their land by “outside” forces. In short, they slowed down the process of the separation of the direct producers from the means of production. It was not until the post-Second World War period that the backbone of the French peasantry was broken.

Compared to France, in Germany and England, the former a “failed bourgeois revolution” and the latter the compromise solution, capitalism developed faster and, especially in Germany, the so-called Prussian road proved to be the shortest possible way for capitalist development. In a mere four decades after its formation, Germany became the most developed bourgeois society in Europe. Lenin’s theory that the Prussian way is the most painful and least revolutionary is both true and false. It is true since the peasants did not become owner-peasants, before being internally differentiated, out of which a “democratic” republican capitalism can develop. It is proven false in that the Prussian road proved to be the shortest and fastest road to

capitalist development of productive forces. The “Prussian road” was to prove its dynamism again in Japan. As usual, Lenin subsumed his economic analysis under political motives. The question of peasant democracy overburdened that of fast capitalist development.

(2) If bourgeois revolution means to say that capitalist development requires a bourgeois revolution then we can hardly disagree. But, in this case, one has to have the courage to swallow the bitter pill that *wherever capitalism developed there has been a bourgeois revolution*. And since capitalism has become planetary, there have been bourgeois revolutions in every “country,” all the way from the U.S. to the Cape Verde Islands, of course, with “very many differences.” This means that bourgeois revolutions have taken place everywhere, i.e., there was feudalism everywhere! This would make *Lineages* redundant.

(3) If bourgeois revolution means a revolution directed against feudalism, then most of what are classified as bourgeois revolutions do not fit in this category. Where was feudalism in seventeenth-century England against which the “bourgeois revolution” was supposedly aimed? Where was the feudalism of the American War of Independence which is also included as a member of the coterie of bourgeois revolutions? Was the Dutch “War of Independence” directed against Spanish feudalism? What about Garibaldi, where was the “Italian” feudalism he fought against? And Bismarck, the famous “revolution from above,” where were the *feudal* lords? Actually, as Engels observed, Bismarck himself was *the* representative of the German Junkers, implying thereby that the Bismarckian “revolution from above” was accomplished, ironically, by the very class which the bourgeois revolution is supposed to destroy — the Junkers. But the Junkers were *not* feudal lords. They “committed class suicide” as feudal, were reborn as bourgeoisie, their difference from their industrial counterpart simply being that they “invested” their capital in agriculture rather than elsewhere. Hence the “revolution from above” accomplished by the Prussian Junkers had no feudal targets to attack. And the Meiji “Restoration”? Did not the Japanese Crown and its feudal patronage “commit class suicide,” like their German counterpart, and transform themselves into bourgeoisie?

Hence, we are left with the “classical” land of the “bourgeois revolution,” France. *Even if* the French Revolution was directed against feudalism, is it not obvious that it is an “exceptional” case of anti-feudal

“bourgeois revolutions,” rather than a *typical* representative of “bourgeois revolutions,” a “classic” as Soboul would have it?

(4) If bourgeois revolution means a revolution that brings about democratic-liberal political and cultural institutions, then it is obvious that this is not what happened. There was a period of almost a century between the revolution of 1789 and the Third Republic in France. Blacks were not to be enfranchised in the U.S. until the 1960's. Germany and Italy had a short honeymoon of liberal democracy which was replaced by Fascism-Nazism, wrongly ascribed to the “survival” of a feudal past in Germany, a rather silly argument based on the assumption that capitalism “normally” gives rise to liberal, parliamentary democracy. Japan's experiment with liberal democracy had to wait until the postwar era, almost a century after the “bourgeois revolution” of the Meiji “Restoration.” The English “bourgeois revolution” ended up in “Restoration,” and when the “Restoration” ended, centuries were to pass before liberal democracy became popular. All these are based on our absolute disregard of capitalism as a *world-system*; hence liberal democracy is not measured by global standards. Had we considered that, quite obviously, the size of the population that “enjoys” liberal democracy gets much smaller. What about women's enfranchisement in the lands of the “bourgeois revolution”? Should not that also be included in the measurement of liberal democracy? On a *global* scale, liberal democracy has been an exception; “dictatorship” the rule. Liberal democracy “normally” has been restricted in those regions where labor has been “free”; even then, with numerous Bonapartisms and emergency laws as its buttress.

(5) If bourgeois revolution means the replacement of Superstition by Enlightenment, Faith by Reason, Religion by Science, Catholic sluggishness by Protestant Ethics, Alchemy by Chemistry, Astrology by Astronomy, the Physiocrats by Adam Smith, then how does one explain the immense proliferation of “superstition” and astrology armed with computers in the U.S. today? The proliferation of computer astrology is so great that the First Lady burned incense for it, prostrated herself in front of its mighty authority, and followed its wisdom of prediction for arranging the work schedule of the most powerful man in the world. Bourgeois imperialist decadence? The imperialist having lost “faith” in science? They cannot “trust” their own monstrous scientific apparatus because they are no more a “rising class,” but a

“decadent, parasitic” one? In short, because of what Lenin’s pamphlet, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, says? Or are we fooled by the whole idea of the triumph of science? Or is it because science is raising more questions than it can possibly answer, which leaves the lacuna to be filled by “scientific” superstition? Is acupuncture science or not? Is Yoga science or religion? Did not modern science arise through a protracted struggle of witch hunts against the knowledge of women in the medical field? Were not midwives burned as witches? Was not the rise of modern science the *second major defeat* of the female sex? Many, many questions, few answers. Our liberal enlightenment bias is so deep that whatever Locke and Newton did not say is anathema to us, although Locke and Newton carried a good deal of religion and “superstition” on their backs. Is not the whole idea of modernization a theoretical justification for the triumph of “science” over “superstition,” and hence “modernity” over “tradition”? The same goes for the grand Weberian project of “rationality.” And what about Catholicism, the religion of feudalism? Today’s France, two centuries after the “classic bourgeois revolution,” is over 90 % Catholic! A feudal residue?

(6) If bourgeois revolution means a revolution that “puts” the bourgeoisie into “state power,” then how do we know if the bourgeoisie is in power or not? Who are the bourgeoisie? How do we know a bourgeois when we see one? Do they include the aristocracy or not? Does bourgeois mean “*productive*” bourgeois as opposed to “unproductive,” and if so, who is a productive bourgeois—the “personification” of productive capital? But what is unproductive capital? Real estate, the “service” sectors? Are private universities productive or not? It depends on what productive means. Yes, they are productive because they produce “human capital.” No, they are not productive since no commodities are produced for sale in the market. But is not “trained” labor power a commodity of the highest order? Are the pornographic industries productive or not? After all, they produce commodities, video tapes, for sale, and “realize” profits.

Very confusing. Or, do the bourgeoisie need to rule? Marx said no, at least in relation to Bonapartism. The “irony” is that Bonapartist-type rules have been the norm in the history of the capitalist world-system, not the exceptions.

(7) If “bourgeois revolution” means a revolution transitional to

capitalism, then what was there *before* the revolution? Transition is a “spongy” term, said Wallerstein (1979a: 138).⁴⁵ But a sponge holds water, provided, of course, one does not squeeze it. If there indeed has been capitalism already developing in all the places which are taken to be “locales” of bourgeois revolutions, then why are the revolutions taken to be transitional? Simply as the “political superstructure” of transition, the “bourgeois revolution,” adjusting, adapting, and “corresponding” to that of the transition of the economic “base?” But why then is the transition from feudalism to capitalism at the level of the economic “base” counted in centuries, while that of the political transitions called “bourgeois revolutions” are not only counted in two, three years but are given precise dates: July 14, 1789, for example?

(8) If “bourgeois revolution” means a general long-term *process* of what Marx called *social revolution*, in the sense he used the term in relation to British rule in India, for example, then we can hardly dispute this. But in this case, “bourgeois revolution” is not a *political* revolution in which two class forces on opposite sides of the barricade fight it out to the end. In this case, “bourgeois revolution” cannot be given a date when it started. Actually, when did the “bourgeois revolution” take place in India? When India was first occupied by Great Britain, the first social revolution in Asia, as Marx called it? When India was “incorporated” into the capitalist world-economy? When India became a politically sovereign state in 1947? Or has a “bourgeois revolution” not yet taken place in India since the bourgeoisie, as a rule, cannot lead a “bourgeois revolution” in the “epoch of imperialism”? Is the “bourgeois revolution” in India waiting for the coming of the proletariat? If so, since the proletariat cannot lead a “bourgeois democratic revolution” by itself without being led by a Marxist Party, who is to play this role of leading the leader? The Communist Party of India? The Communist Party of India (Marxist)? Or the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)?

Too many questions; too few answers.

Well, we don’t need to have eleven “theses.” The major issues and questions related to the theory of “bourgeois revolution” have been raised. And every major thesis of “bourgeois revolution” we picked up is confronted with dozens of “anti-theses”; exceptions here and there; loopholes; lacunae; blurred areas marked grey — simply put, logical and regional refusals to be classified under the generic rubric of “bourgeois revolution.”

From all these we can conclude that a concept like “bourgeois revolution” that puts in one pot the American War of Independence and/or the Civil War; the French Revolutions of 1789 and 1848; the English Revolution of the 1640’s; the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and February 1917; the “failed” “German” revolution of 1848, the “successful” Prussian-Junker-Bismarckian “revolution from above” of the 1870’s, and the German Revolution of 1918 that led to Weimar; the nationalist unification movement of the Garibaldis in Italy in the 1860’s; the Dutch rebellion against the Spanish crown in the sixteenth century; the Meiji restoration of the 1860’s in Japan; and even, as some would argue, the Napoleonic wars that expanded the territorial limits of the “bourgeois revolution” beyond French soil — to put all these, and more, in the same pot of “bourgeois revolution” is not just “unfortunate” but simply logical inconsistency of the first order. A mere knowledge that *capitalist development does not need any bourgeois revolution* would have made the necessity of the concept, “bourgeois revolution,” redundant, and confusing at best.

But, after all is said and done, there is one fundamental justification among almost all Marxists for their use of the term “bourgeois revolution.” It is an argument based on analogy — that of the proletarian revolution. Just as the transition from capitalism to socialism takes place through a proletarian revolution, so in the same way, it is assumed that the transition from feudalism to capitalism must have taken place through a bourgeois revolution. Just as the proletariat has to overthrow the bourgeoisie, so should have the bourgeoisie overthrown the feudal lords. Once one has this imagery of the necessity of revolutions as transitional from one socio-economic formation to another, it is quite easy to read feudal in the English aristocracy of 1640. But there are two problems in our “theory.” First, the question of “Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism.” We know that Antiquity was based on a “slave mode of production,” feudalism on the feudal mode of production. They are two qualitatively different systems. The transition from Antiquity to Feudalism should, therefore, have taken place through a revolution. But what revolution? Slave revolution, as in slaves making revolution against slave owners and instituting feudalism, instead of slavery? Slave owners “committing class suicide” and replacing slaves by serfs in the process of making themselves feudal lords instead of slave owners? Or a feudal revolution, in which the feudal lords overthrow slavery and

established their rule? No. According to Perry Anderson himself, the rise of feudalism is one of synthesis of Germanic “barbarism” and Roman civilization. There was no revolution in the transition from Antiquity to Feudalism, unless one calls every transition to a new social system a revolution, so that the transition from “primitive communism” to slavery was also a revolution!

The second “difficulty” is in relation to the comparison between the bourgeois and the proletarian revolutions. In the former, the feudal lord can outsmart history by *transforming* himself into a bourgeois, thereby closing the need for a bourgeois revolution, i.e., the ruling class under feudalism can also become the ruling class under capitalism once the class suicide is performed. And this was what actually happened in England, Germany, and Japan, to mention but a few. But, in the case of the proletarian revolution, the bourgeois cannot become proletarian, even if class suicide is contemplated. Hence, the transition from capitalism to socialism cannot take place save through a revolution. In all previous transitions from one class society to another, since what was replaced was a class society, even though a different one, the ruling class of the previous class society can pass on as a ruling class to the new class society once the necessary “surgical operations” are conducted. That is why, in the transition from feudalism to capitalism, a revolution is not a necessity. Accordingly, it is quite clear that the theory of bourgeois revolution based on the analogy with proletarian revolution is rather swampy. Just as Marxists read feudalism from a bourgeois standpoint, they read capitalism from a proletarian standpoint. Hence, just as there must be a proletarian revolution, so they think, so should there be (or have been) a bourgeois revolution!

Absolutism. If “bourgeois revolution” is indeed a revolution directed against Absolutism, which was the reorganized power of the feudal nobility, as the proponents of the theory of “bourgeois revolution” would have us understand it, then what about the American Revolution(s) of 1776 or the 1860’s, or both? Where was the Absolutism? Nowhere, simply because there was no feudalism in America. Maybe we are raising a silly case here. Let us, therefore, take serious cases, on the other side of the Atlantic.

Was Absolutism a *feudal* state apparatus? Did the “bourgeois revolutions” overthrow this *feudal* state apparatus and replace it with a “bourgeois state apparatus”? How different was the Absolutist state as “feudal”

from the post-revolution states as “bourgeois”? How could a state structure become bourgeois today which was feudal just yesterday?

Marx, writing about mid-nineteenth-century France, the “classic” land of Absolutism in continental Europe, said:

This executive power with its enormous bureaucratic and military organization, with its ingenious state machinery, embracing wide strata, with a host of officials numbering half a million, besides an army of another half million, this appalling parasitic body, which enmeshes the body of French society like a net and chokes all its pores, sprang up in the days of the absolute monarchy, with the decay of the feudal system which it helped to hasten. The seignorial privileges of the landowners and towns became transformed into so many attributes of the state power, the feudal dignitaries into paid officials and the motley pattern of conflicting medieval plenary powers into the regulated plan of a state authority whose work is divided and centralized as in a factory. The first French Revolution, with its task of breaking all separate local, territorial, urban and provincial powers in order to create the civil unity of the nation, was bound to develop what the absolute monarchy had begun: centralisation, but at the same time the extent, the attributes and the agents of governmental power. Napoleon perfected this state machinery. The Legitimist monarchy and the July monarchy added nothing but a greater division of labour, growing in the same measure as the division of labour within bourgeois society created new groups of interests, and, therefore, new material for state administration. Every *common* interest was straightway served from society, counterposed to it as a higher, *general* interest, snatched from the activity of society’s members themselves and made an object of government activity, from bridge, a schoolhouse and the communal property of a village community to the railways, the national wealth and the national university of France. . . . All revolutions perfected this machine instead of smashing it. The parties that contended in turn for domination regarded the possession of this huge state edifice as the principal spoils of the victor (1968b: 170–71).

Thus far, Marx, not Weber. Every single word needs to be italicized. “All revolutions perfected this machine instead of smashing it”!

What more devastating criticism of the theory of “bourgeois revolution” destroying the state structures of Absolutism can be made than this? Wait, maybe we are being overexcited. Is it not the case that the whole idea of “bourgeois revolution” is one in which the bourgeoisie *replaces* the feudal nobility as the ruling class? Is it not the case that:

A class is not a finite group of families, but rather a bus or a hotel, always full, but always filled with different people. . . . The social structure itself should be regarded as a continuum with bottlenecks, or alternatively as a stepped pyramid or lozenge. Short of a major social revolution and the confiscation and redistribution of land and capital, social mobility may alter the shape of the figure, may broaden or narrow some of the steps; but except over a long period of time it is unlikely either to eliminate the existing steps or to create new ones (Stone, 1965: 38–39).

“Social mobility,” no; a bourgeois concept. The same social structure, filled with different people? Maybe. But how do we know the people *after* 1648 in state power were different from those before 1648? Did not the former “restore” their power in 1688?⁴⁶

Marx’s powerful surgery of the French “state” as one long continuum of bureaucratic centralization, in which there was *no* break after 1789, is based on a rather commonplace theory in the writings of Marx and Engels. Engels wrote:

All revolutions up to the present day [i.e., 1895] have resulted in the displacement of one definite class rule by another; but all ruling classes up to now have been only small minorities in relation to the ruled masses of the people. One ruling minority was thus overthrown; another minority seized the helm of state in its stead and refashioned the state institutions to suit its own interests. . . . But if we disregard the concrete content in each case, the common form of all these revolutions was that they were minority revolutions. Even when the majority took part, it did so—whether wittingly or not—only in the service of a minority; but because of this, or even simply because of the passive, unresisting attitude of the majority, this minority acquired the appearance of being the representative of the whole people (1968a: 655).

And since all “bourgeois revolutions” have been revolutions *of* the minority, *by* the minority, and *for* the minority, they do not have to smash the Absolutist state apparatus. All they need to do is “refashion the state institutions to suit their own interests.” *Only* the proletarian-socialist revolution needs to smash the hitherto existing state apparatus since, as Marx learned from the Paris Commune, the proletariat can *not* use the state machinery for its own purposes. Hence, Lenin’s call: all power to the *Soviets*.

But if there was no qualitative break between the Absolutist state and the “bourgeois state” of the post-“bourgeois revolution” period, then what was Absolutism? Engels had this to say about the Absolutist state:

Thus, the state of antiquity was above all the state of the slave owners for the purpose of holding down the slaves, as the feudal state was the organ of the nobility for holding down the peasant serfs and bondsmen, and the modern representative state is an instrument of exploitation of wage labour by capital. By way of exception, however, periods occur in which the warring classes balance each other so nearly that the state power, as ostensible mediator, acquires, for the moment, a certain degree of independence of both. Such was the absolute monarchy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which held the balance between the nobility and the class of burghers; such was the Bonapartism of the First, and still more of the Second French Empire, which played off the proletariat against the bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie against the proletariat. The latest performance of this kind, in which ruler and ruled appear equally ridiculous, is the new German Empire of the Bismarck nation: here capitalists and workers are balanced against each other and equally cheated for the benefit of the impoverished Prussian cabbage Junkers (1968b: 587–88).

A very famous thesis. Marx had the same to say:

Modern histories have demonstrated that *absolute* monarchy *appears* [emphasis added] in those transitional periods when the old feudal estates are in decline and the medieval estate of burghers is evolving into the modern bourgeois class, without one of the contending parties having as yet finally disposed of the other (1976: VI, 326).

A very carefully worded statement: Absolute monarchy “appears.” Does not this mean when absolutism *arose historically*, and not mean *throughout* its existence? Is not Marx talking about the “genesis” of Absolutism and not its continued existence for more than two centuries, as in England and France? And in Engels’s balance formula, who were the nobility which Absolutism balanced against the bourgeoisie? Were they *feudal* nobility, or were they bourgeois? If they were the latter, why did Engels, instead of saying balance among the various *fractions* of the bourgeois class, say balance between the nobility *and* the bourgeoisie? Is he not talking of balance of different *classes*, and not just of fractions of the same class? We are the ones misreading Engels. He did not say nobility and *bourgeoisie*; he said nobility and “class of burghers.” Yes, urban burghers. But the expression “class of burghers” is self-contradictory; burgher is an *estate*, not a class. If it is a *class*, it is bourgeois, not burgher. In the second pair of terms to balance, the term “bourgeoisie” is used as in the First French Empire, less than five years after the 1789 “bourgeois revolution.” To say the “class of burghers” of 1789 became a bourgeois class in less than five years is absurd.

Hence, on the question of Absolutism we have three positions. *Pace* Anderson, *et al.*, Absolutism is a *feudal* state. *Pace* Wallerstein, *et al.*, Absolutism is a *bourgeois* state. In “between” these two “extremes” is Engels’s view that Absolutism “balances” the “nobility” against the “class of burghers.”

Whether the nobility were part of the bourgeoisie or whether they were *feudal* lords hanging on the last rope of history has been discussed by Marx and Engels in many places. Writing about 1848 Prussia and the big landowners there, Marx remarked:

The big landowners and capitalists, who were exclusively represented in the Assembly—in a word, the *moneybags*—augmented their wealth and education. On the one hand, with the development of bourgeois society in Prussia—the old class differences lost their material foundations. The nobility itself became *substantially* bourgeoisified. Instead of Loyalty, Love, and Faith, it now, *above all*, produced beets, gin, and wool. The wool market became its main tournament (1971a: 458; emphases added).

Quite clear. But if the Prussian nobility were “substantially bourgeoisified,” what then about the Prussian “bourgeois revolution”? What was its target?

The Prussian March Revolution was supposed to have established a constitutional monarchy in theory and a bourgeois rule in reality. Far from being a European revolution, it was merely the stunted aftereffect of a European revolution in a backward country. Instead of being in advance of its century, it was more than half a century behind its century. It was from the outset secondary, but it is known that secondary ailments are harder to cure, and at the same time waste the body more, than do primary ones. What was involved was not the rebirth in Berlin of a society that had died in Paris. The Prussian March Revolution was not even *national*, German, it was from the outset *provincial Prussian*. The Viennese, the Cassel, the Munich uprisings and all sorts of others paralleled and it [sic] challenged its supremacy.

While 1648 and 1789 had the inexhaustible self-reliance to be the spearhead of creativity, the ambition of the Berliners of 1848 was to create an anachronism. Its light was to be like the light of the stars, which reaches us earthlings only after the body that radiated it has been extinguished for a hundred thousand years. The Prussian March Revolution was in miniature, as everything Prussian is in miniature, such a star for Europe. Its light was the light of a long-gone social corpse (Marx, 1971a: 461).

“Ironically” enough, the Prussian star was to become the biggest living, shining star in just four decades! Prussia became a born-again Germany, and in the 1880’s, before Marx’s own biological star became a corpse, Germany was to be the most advanced bourgeois “society” in continental Europe. How could it have been otherwise in a “Germany” where:

The rage of getting rich, of going ahead, of opening new mines, of building new factories, of constructing new railways, and above all of investing in and gambling with joint-stock-company shares, became the passion of the day and infected all classes, from the peasant even to the coronated prince. . . . So, you see,

the days when the bourgeoisie wept in Babylonian captivity and dropped their diminished heads were the very days when they became the effective power of the land, while even the inner man of the overbearing aristocrat became converted into a profit-loving, money-mongering stock-jobber. If you want an example of speculative philosophy converted into commercial speculation, look at Hamburg in 1857 (Marx, 1977: 64).

1857 — before even a united Germany was born, before Bismarck's "revolution from above." From Bismarck to the latest BMW convertibles, "the ultimate driving machine," the star of Germany was to shine as one of the brightest in the galaxy of capitalist civilization. Its Mercedes-Benzes became the most class-blind automobiles in the world, automobiles which captured the minds of people all the way from the General Secretary of the CPSU, taking a ride to a party conference to denounce imperialism, down to the enlightened "fascism" of a Pinochet. From the "administrative bourgeoisie" of miserable Mali to the Ginza district of downtown Tokyo, from the narrow alleys of Wall Street to the wide space of Red Square, the Mercedes-Benz has become an indomitable class-blind shrine in front of whose majesty every human prostrates. Herein lies its "specificity": "Engineered like no other car in the world"! The "Germans" marched at the head of Europe, not just in Hegel, but also in Adam Smith. Despite two destructive world wars, despite "partition," despite almost no colonies, the German bourgeoisie "accomplished" something which the bourgeoisie of the most revolutionary "bourgeois revolutions" could not dream. The "German" star blinded the other stars of "bourgeois revolution." This is the "Prussian road" to capitalist development, the exact opposite of what it was meant to be! And all this *without* a "bourgeois revolution"? Or, is Bismarck to be the *deus ex machina* explanation for a moth-eaten theory called "bourgeois revolution," this time "from above"?⁴⁷

What, then, were the English and French revolutions, if not bourgeois? The answer is a question: which English and French revolutions? 1642–48, 1688–89 England? 1789, 1830, 1848 France? If indeed the "gentry" were becoming bourgeois in England long *before* the English "bourgeois" revolution, if aristocracy was a status, and not a class insignia, what was 1642–48 then?

The *entire discussion on the question of "bourgeois revolution" boils down*

to one crucial issue: the class identity of the aristocracy. Whether they were feudal or bourgeois is the cutting edge of the entire theory of "bourgeois revolution." "If what divided nobles from bourgeois once received too much attention, what divided bourgeois from bourgeois and noble from noble did not receive enough" (Doyle, 1980: 21). Since historians tell us that during the English civil war the bourgeoisie and the nobility were split up *within each of them*, one part siding with Parliament, the other with the King, so that on both sides there were bourgeois *and* nobility,⁴⁸ and since we also know that these nobilities, these aristocrats, were not *feudal* at all but were engaged in *capitalist* farming, deriving income from capitalist *rent*, as opposed to *feudal* rent (Tawney, 1941), it is simply absurd to say the Civil War was a bourgeois-feudal struggle, the latter represented by Charles I.

What, then, was the English Civil War, if not "bourgeois revolution"? How about an intra-bourgeois class struggle? The working people acted independently, as the case of the Levellers and Diggers, the latter perhaps the first communist movement in history, showed. Both were crushed by Cromwell, the Napoleon of the English "bourgeois revolution." If the idea of an intra-bourgeois class struggle, in which many sectors of the bourgeoisie take different *political* views and fight them out seems not to make sense, read the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. If the idea of the same "class" cutting each other's throat makes no sense, look at the Middle Ages! By *analogy*, we have ample evidence today of Marxists cutting each other's throat, and yet Marxists do not even form a class! If the whole idea of intra-bourgeois class struggle makes no sense, look at the Second World War: two world bourgeoisies — the Allied and the Axis — fighting it out to the end. The former liberal, civilized, democratic; the latter "totalitarian," barbaric, fascist. And, of course, the Marxists joined hands with the "democratic" world bourgeoisie against the fascist bourgeoisie.

Maybe this is a silly analogy. The Second World War was fought among *nations*, the English Civil War was fought between classes *within a nation*. Yes, our analogy is silly, provided the *framework* of our analysis is the nation-state. But if it is the world market, then the story becomes different. After all, was not the American "bourgeois revolution" fought between two nations, or at least, between a dominant imperial power and a colony in need of independence? What about the first "bourgeois revolution" in history, the revolt of the Netherlands

against Spain, or Italy against Spain and Austria? Are not these “bourgeois revolutions” fought among “states”? If, indeed, the English and Dutch revolutions were both “bourgeois revolutions” directed against feudalism or its survivals, then it does not matter at all whether the feudal side in the revolutionary equation is “internal” or “external” to the “nation-state.”

We do not need to demolish the theory of “bourgeois revolution” in each “national” situation. Once we create a hole in just one “locale,” England, then the rest is bound to leak.

The theory of “bourgeois revolution” is meant to explain the overthrow of Absolutism. The revolution against Absolutism is a revolution against feudalism since Absolutism is a *feudal* state. Hence, bourgeois revolution, Absolutism and feudalism are interconnected *logical* explanations, one building upon the other. *Historically*, the order of “succession” is feudalism-Absolutism-bourgeois revolution. The *logic* runs backwards in *historical* time; the *history* runs forward in historical time. Since, therefore, both logically and historically, feudalism, Absolutism, and bourgeois revolution are so intertwined, a defect in one of the Trinity is bound to produce a catastrophe in all the rest. After all, what is God if one of the Trinity is not up to its world-historical role? We found a deep hole in the theory of bourgeois revolution, the logical and historical summa of the Trinity. We cannot help declaring: God is dead, because the Holy Spirit is dead. Long live the Holy Spirit! Long live the bourgeois revolution!

Now that God is dead, do we have an alternative? There is one candidate readily available, among others—world-systems theory.

In the grand corpus of their writings, Immanuel Wallerstein and Terence Hopkins have conceived a historical project whose main contour of arguments runs as follows: Once upon a time there was a system called feudalism. Later in time, it entered an old-age crisis. The crisis was “resolved” by transformation into a new type of social system, a system that never existed in history before. It is called the capitalist world-economy. It arose in the sixteenth century in Europe. It is marked by the twin process of world-wide division of labor and capital accumulation. It is also marked by a unified global economy and parcellized state sovereignties. The former is called “capitalist world-economy”; the latter is called “interstate system.” The two together are known as the “capitalist world-system,” or the “modern world-system.”

Outside this world-system were various forms of world-empires and mini-systems which are residually called “external arena.” These external arenas were gradually “incorporated” into the capitalist world-system. Depending upon the relative strength of states of the external arena, the newly-incorporated regions become peripheral, if they have a weak state or no state, semiperipheral, if they have a stronger state. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the capitalist world-system covered the entire globe. Any social transformation of this capitalist world-system has to be global. It cannot be a mere addition of one revolution here and another one over there. If it is to be a revolution, it has to be global. The historical struggles for an alternate social system is a struggle for an alternate *world* social system. The various forms of the struggle against the capitalist world-system — class, ethnic, gender, and even age — are part of the family of “antisystemic movements.” There is no hierarchical evaluation of the importance of one of the “antisystemic movements” over the other; for example, the proletarian *class* struggle does not have primacy over the women’s movement. The historical alternative to the capitalist world-system is a socialist world-system which is possible, but not inevitable, either as an alternative system — other alternatives are not impossible — or as the coming to be of Nirvana. Communism is Utopia.

Hence, in this grand project, there was only one “Original Sin,” only one transition, only one “bourgeois revolution” — the rise of the capitalist world-economy in the sixteenth century. What came after that is a history of incorporation.

Clear, coherent, systematic, structured, clean slate. Its logical “superiority” of methodology to the Anderson-type historiographies is best manifested in its leaving no room for exceptions. Its thoroughgoing critique of “national” analyses is superb. But, there is one problem: *it is too clean*. It is impossible to say it has a “good side” one agrees with and a “bad side” one does not. Its “remarkable coherence” (Amin) can be a standard for logical consistency. *Whether this remarkable logical coherence is achieved instead of and at the expense of historical multifariousness needs to be studied*. So far, though, it seems not. If “it” has an Achilles’ heel, it is the very “part” from which there has been immense contributions of study — the “periphery.” The greatest “danger” for the theory seems to come from the taking of the “external arena” as unproblematic. Those who were “incorporated” are *people*, although they may be buried un-

der one long commodity chain. Their history needs thorough study. This study should begin with the rejection of taking the “external arena” as the world-system theory’s version of “pre-capitalist formations.” Residuality is a heavy blanket that suffocates the free flow of the air of history.

And yet, there is one logical justification of the need for residuality: it sets boundaries to a theoretical project without which, in an attempt to be most comprehensive by leaving out nothing, the price to be paid may indeed be the empiricist galaxy of narrative accounts. If indeed world-systems theory is a *framework* of analysis, and not a philosopher’s stone or a master key that unlocks all the closed doors of historical ignorance, then the research on the detailed “specificities” of the “external arena” can be carried out by those scholars who happen to be “specializing” in different “non-European” societies, since almost all “external arenas” happen to be “non-European.” On the other hand, how can world-systems theory be what it is if not by excluding the “external arena” from the terms of its discourse? The “external arena” enters into the history of the capitalist world-system at the moment of its incorporation. With the first “date” of “incorporation” of the “external arena” begins day one of its history *within* the capitalist world-system. With this day one, the “external arena” ceases to be external arena anymore. To write the history of the “external arena” prior to “incorporation” can be anything but a history of the *external arena*. It can be the history of a civilization, for example.

And Anderson, well, his self-condemnation to the labor of Sisyphus. Four specificities, and two more.

Specificity I: Feudalism is specific to Europe. Origin of Specificity I—classical antiquity.

Specificity II: Capitalism is specific to Europe and its “overseas settlements.” Origin of Specificity II—Specificity I.

Specificity III: Democracy is specific to the “West.” Origin of Specificity III—Specificity II.

Specificity IV: “Western Marxism” is specific to the “West.” Origin of Specificity IV—Specificity III.

And two additional “specificities”—backwards in time, the Origin of all origins, the Original paradise—Greco-Roman civilization *and* Germanic barbarians, whose fusion created Specificity I. Forwards in time—Western socialism. Origin-specificities III and IV, as immedi-

ate sources, and specificities II and I as mediate, remote sources. All the six “specificities” are linked to each other in one “great chain of being” orchestrated by a remote control called the “specificity of the West”! Sadly enough, the remote control made in Taiwan had the difficulty of explaining how what was clean and smooth all the way from specificities I to II “suddenly” replaced the word “Europe” by “West.” Yes, there is a “technical” difficulty the remote control cannot figure out. We need human agency. Specificities I and II were contrasted against the rest of the world, “save” Japan. The contrast was between “Europe” and “the rest of us.” In Specificity III, Europe was cut into two, the western part as democratic, the eastern part as autocratic. Following Specificity III, Marxism itself was cut into two in Specificity IV. It was to have a double personality. The western part was to be “Western Marxism,” inheritor of all the intellectual and cultural wealth of the Enlightenment. It was “condemned to be free.” The eastern part was condemned to inherit all the political and cultural backwardness of its autocratic past. As to Lukacs, although he was Hungarian, he was *really* German!

How “western” was Sartre, and how “Third Worldist” was Fanon? Sartre, who called America “mad dog,” and Fanon, who raised a new leaf for Europe, for humanity. How Pan-Africanist was Walter Rodney, and how “western” is Immanuel Wallerstein? Although Marx was German, he was “really” English. And Germany? Well, it is where the “West” and “East” are demarcated. Perhaps so. But, we mean, Germany *itself*? Dead end. How “western” are Hegel, Nietzsche, Ernst Haeckel, Heidegger? And how “eastern” are Trotsky, Plekhanov, and Martov? How “western” was Maurice Thorez, as opposed to Stalin? An *ideological* theory whose project from beginning to end is to prove the superiority of the “West” via its specificity is paralyzed in front of these questions, since it never originally asked the “question of all questions”: what is the “West,” and, above all, where is it located?!

“Let [the notion of the Asiatic mode of production] be given the decent burial that it deserves. . . . It is merely in the night of our ignorance that all alien shapes take on the same hue,” wrote Anderson (1979: 548–49). We concur. But what is more night of ignorance than the ignorance of arrogance, built on the assumption of the “superiority” of the people of a “tiny pocket” of the planet and, of course, “its overseas settlements”? Fortunately enough, there are keen observers of Anderson’s project, one of whom happens to be his “countryman”:

Paul Hirst. His is so far the best critique of Anderson's obsession with "specificity of Europe."⁴⁹ The best critique of Dobb's theory of the transition from feudalism to capitalism came from the pen of Robert Brenner (Brenner, 1978: 2).⁵⁰ Paul Hirst and Robert Brenner are Marxists, just like Dobb and Anderson!

NOTES

1. After remarking "only France has a Paris," in which "all the nerve-fibres of European history unite," Paris, the "Queen of Cities," Engels exclaims, "The Seine seems to exhale the air of Paris right down to its mouth," "From Paris to Berne," Marx & Engels, *Collected Works* (1977: VII, 512–13).

2. Engels furthermore noted that:

When the great monarchies developed in Western Europe in the wake of bourgeois civilization, the inland countries of the Upper Danube likewise had to unite in a great monarchy. This was required if only for the needs of defence. Here, in the center of Europe, the barbarians of all tongues and all nations associated under the sceptre of the House of Hapsburg. Here they found in Hungary a mainstay of solid barbarism.

The Danube, the Alps, the rocky breastworks of Bohemia—these are the bases for the existence of Austrian barbarism and of the Austrian monarchy (1977: 531).

3. Joseph Strayer and Rushton Coulborn wrote:

The idea of feudalism is an abstraction derived from some of the facts of early European history, but it is not itself one of those facts. No contemporary of William the Conqueror or Godfrey of Bouillon ever used the term; it was invented by scholars, chiefly scholars of the eighteenth century (1965: 3).

The Middle Ages never knew that its society or its governments deserved to be called "feudal" (Herlihy, 1971: xiv).

The word feudalism comes from the *feu*, *feud*, or *feudum*, or as it is more usually known today, the fee or the fief. This was a form of property described in the lawbooks of medieval Europe. The feudal law was the law of the fief, as distinct from the law dealing with other kinds of property. The most famous collection of this feudal law was contained in the *Libri Feudorum*, The Books of the Fiefs (Critchley, 1978: 11).

Such was, then, the "self-consciousness" of feudal society, i.e., that it knew itself as a "society of fiefs."

4. Hence, Marx wrote:

Human anatomy contains a key to the anatomy of the ape. The intimations of higher development among the subordinate animal species, however, can be understood only after the higher development is already known. The bourgeois economy thus supplies the key to the ancient, etc. (1973: 105).

A century later, K. Takahashi repeated the same thesis: "... a rational analysis of the historical character of feudalism would be possible *post-festum* ..." (1978: 87). The Owl of Minerva spreads its wings at dusk—so said Hegel, "anticipating" his greatest admirer and greatest critic.

As for the idea that critics of a social relation are in a better condition to understand the "laws of motion" of "societies" than apologists, Marx wrote:

bourgeois economics arrived at an understanding of feudal, ancient, oriental economics only after the self-criticism of bourgeois society had begun. Insofar as the bourgeois economy did not mythologically identify itself altogether with the past, its critique of the previous economies, notably of feudalism, with which it was still engaged in direct struggle, resembled the critique which Christianity levelled against paganism, or also that of Protestantism against Catholicism (1973: 106).

The Marxist thesis that revolutionary politics is the clue to social scientific objectivity is a rather popular view. Hence the Enlightenment's view of feudalism; the Marxist view of capitalism. However, with the mushrooming of dozens of ways of "reading" Marx and sorting out what he "really meant," not to speak of Marxists crossing swords with each other more often than with their historical class adversary, it is very presumptuous to uphold the thesis in its crudity anymore. After all, it cannot be ruled out that revolutionary politics can be the deadly enemy of scientific objectivity. Remember the campaign to "Criticize Confucius and Lin Biao"!

5. Marx wrote of this as follows:

It is altogether self-evident that, to be able to fight at all, the working class must organize itself at home *as a class* and that its own country is the immediate arena of its struggle. Insofar its class struggle is national, not in substance, but, as the *Communist Manifesto* says, "in form." But the "framework of the present national state," for instance, the German Empire, is itself in its turn economically "within the framework" of the world market, politically "within the framework" of the system of states. Every businessman knows that German trade is at the same time foreign trade, and the greatness of Herr Bismarck consists, to be sure, precisely in pursuing a kind of *international* policy (1968: 327).

"World market" = capitalist world-economy;

"system of states" = inter-state system;

"German trade is at the same time foreign trade" = "German" economy is the capitalist world-economy *in Germany*. Alas, does not this sound too "world-systemist," although the language is that of the nineteenth century? Anyway, the contrast of this world-embracing civilization with that of the feudal order is quite conspicuous, although some "Marxists," stuck up in "production," as "opposed" to "circulation," understand capitalism much less than that of what "every businessman knows," and every statesman knows, including Bismarck. Engels also repeatedly discussed what he called "the European system of states." See his "The Movements of 1847" (1976: VI, 523).

6. The statement "serf labour attached to it" is the expression of feudal relations of production as far as the characteristic form of existence of labor power under feudalism is concerned. In the famous debate on the *Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, Takahashi took the question of the "social existence-form of labor power" to be "the basic, the decisive factor in the various modes of production." Accordingly, he said of feudalism that "serfdom is the characteristic existence-form of labor power in the feudal modes of production" (1978: 70).

The critical importance this thesis has for the assumption that feudalism long outlived the demise of serfdom goes without saying.

7. The status of serfdom is like that of slavery. Slavery is slavery be it in the form found in the American south, Abbasid "Iraq," eunuchs of the Seraglio, or domestic slaves in Ethiopia. Serfdom is serfdom be it in tenth-century Normandy or the "second serfdom" of seventeenth-century Poland and Bohemia. *However*, beneath the similarity of terms, the social relations of production in which both slavery and serfdom are encompassed respectively is not the same. What does a slave in nineteenth-century Carolinas have in common with the Mamelukes?

Nothing, save a common name, which is a name of *status*, and not of *class*. There is no such thing as a *slave class*. The same goes for the serf and serfdom. Is it not in this context of argument that Wallerstein says that the "second serfdom" was one of the means of labor control under *capitalism*, i.e., that the *form* of existence of labor power should not be confused with the *substance* of the larger social relations of production in which the *form* is integrated? Perhaps so. In the following remark, Wallerstein corroborates this perception:

The *formal* relations of land controller to productive worker are not in fact what matters. The so-called reciprocal nexus we identify with feudalism, the exchange of protection for labor services, constitutes the feudal *mode of production* only when it is *determinate of other social relations*. But once such a "nexus" is contained *within* a capitalist world-economy, its autonomous reality disappears. It becomes rather one of the many *forms* of bourgeois employment of proletarian labor to be found in the *capitalist* mode of production, a form that is maintained, expanded or diminished in relation to its profitability on the market (1979a: 147).

Hence the "second serfdom" as one of the forms of labor control under capitalism. M. I. Finley made the same observation about serfdom.

Serfdom is too closely associated with feudal Europe, and therefore not merely with attachment to the soil but equally with such feudal relations as vassalage and with the legal jurisdiction of the individual landowner, to be torn loose from a social background that did not exist in antiquity in order to maintain a conventional tripartite terminology (slave, serf, free labour) (1985: 184–85).

At the other extreme, Banaji, "comparing" the "classical" feudalism of the "West" with the "pure" feudalism of the "East" wrote:

the feudal enterprise in the early epoch of so-called "classical" feudalism *crystallized*, or acquired its truly classical form . . . only sporadically; and then only rarely in its pure form. In the grain-exporting countries of the "second serfdom," the predominant form of feudal enterprise was the developed form. The primitiveness and barbarity of their social relations were an expression of the maturity of feudal relations of production, of their relative purity (1977: 24).

The extreme opposite of the Wallersteinian thesis on the "second serfdom."

8. Witold Kula is one of the few Marxists whose works on feudalism avoid definition of the term. On the contrary, in his concrete study of Poland between 1500–1800, the period of so-called second serfdom, he *described* ten "elements" in Poland. See his *An Economic Theory of the Feudal System* (1976: 26).

9. The writings of Rodney Hilton seem not to be the "norm" among Marxist discussions on feudalism. He viewed comprehensively the four "elements" studied in detail by non-Marxist historians. See his works: *A Medieval Society*; *Bond Men Made Free*; *The English Peasantry in the Later Middle Ages*.

10. Hence R. A. Brown wrote about

the merit of placing the emphasis [on feudalism] where it is needed most, that is, upon the upper levels of society. The condition of the peasantry is strictly irrelevant to any argument about the existence of feudalism. . . . What matters is the *ethos* and the *mores* of the ruling classes, their legal and customary relations with each other, the way they held their lands, the services, especially the military services, which they rendered and to whom they rendered them. Feudalism is about lords and lordship, more especially about military and tenurial lordship, and the characteristic products of feudal society are knights and castles (1985; See also D. Herlihy, *op.cit.*, p. xviii).

F. L. Ganshof defined feudalism as:

a development pushed to extremes of the element of personal dependence in society, with a specialized military class occupying the higher levels in the social scale; an extreme subdivision of the rights of property; a graded system of rights over land created by this subdivision and corresponding in broad outline to the grades of personal dependence just referred to; and a dispersal of political authority amongst a hierarchy of persons who exercise in their own interest powers normally attributed to the State and which are often, in fact, derived from its break-up (1961: xix).

Joseph Strayer had the same view. "... Western European feudalism is essentially political—it is a form of government (1965: 16). Then he added this amplifier: "Effective feudal government is local, and at one local level public authority has become a private possession (1965: 17). In Perry Anderson's language this constitutes the parcellization of sovereignty, as opposed to centralized sovereignty.

11. Braudel was quite aware that Europe is a "confused concept." He remarked:

[Europe] is a twofold or even threefold world, composed of peoples and territories with whom history has dealt very differently. The Mediterranean, by its profound influence over southern Europe, has contributed in no small measure to prevent the unity of that Europe, which it has attracted towards its shores and then divided to its own advantage (Braudel, 1972: I, 188).

Hence, the "perennial question: is Spain wholly European?" (Braudel, 1972: I, 18). Well, it depends upon one's "religion": if one is a Christian, then the Arabs who dominated Spain were "intruders" who "camped" in Spain for over four centuries "without ever becoming naturalized," always "strangers" to "European culture," thereby presenting "intractable problems of the unitary history" of Europe! Contrary to the ghost of Anderson, Braudel commented:

I retain the firm conviction that the Turkish Mediterranean lived and breathed with the same rhythms as the Christian, that the whole sea shared a common destiny, a heavy one indeed, with identical problems and general trends if not identical consequences (1972: I, 14).

For Braudel, the ghost of the "intruder" disappears in the vast expanse of a lovable, "land-locked sea." See also Marshall Hodgson's excellent observation on the concept of Europe in his *The Venture of Islam* (1974: I, 49, 53–54).

12. In his *Poverty of Philosophy*, Marx wrote:

To take only this one aspect of the division of labour, you have the republics of antiquity and you have Christian feudalism, you have old England with its barons and you have modern England with its cotton lords (1964: VI, 179).

The expression "Christian feudalism" seems to be a synonym for medieval Europe.

13. "... a major historiographical problem, a zone of formidable uncertainty: the Ottoman Empire ... we can glimpse the Turkish world from the outside," so wrote Braudel (1972: I, 13). How could he have perceived it otherwise in French? The fog of the "formidable uncertainty" becomes clear only when one starts to speak the language of the Ottomans themselves. Unlike Anderson, though, Braudel did not see the Ottoman Empire as an "intrusion" of an alien body into Europe.

14. Anderson does not want to identify Christendom with feudalism. Hence this qualification:

The boundaries of European feudalism ... were fundamentally set neither by religion nor by topography; although both manifestly overdetermined [...] them. Christendom was never coextensive with this mode of production [i.e., feudalism]: there was no feudalism in medieval Ethiopia or Lebanon (1979: 411).

There was no feudalism in medieval Ethiopia! Of course, this statement of Anderson is made up of residuality as ignorance. The question of whether there was feudalism in Ethiopia or not needs not be raised in the first place simply because Ethiopia is not part of Europe; the latter is the only "privileged" sector of the world to possess feudalism as *its* private property.

15. Immanuel Wallerstein commented in a footnote that Anderson "intelligently denounced" the "promiscuous" application of the term feudal everywhere (1979a: 146).

There is one basic difference though. Wallerstein sees no feudalism anywhere because he sees capitalism everywhere, while Anderson sees no feudalism anywhere because he restricts feudalism to Europe alone, save, of course, Japan. The two are talking entirely different languages. Wallerstein's footnote referring to Anderson seems, therefore, wrongly applied. After all the footnote is related to this comment by Wallerstein:

Feudalism has been applied either to almost all non-capitalist structures encountered by capitalist institutions when new areas were incorporated into the capitalist world-economy, or to entities, groups, or units resistant to the process of the proletarianization of labor and the commercialization of land (1979a: 146).

The question of whether feudalism is the unique property of Europe or not is not even raised. Hence, the irrelevance of the footnote to Wallerstein's argument.

The most "promiscuous," both in territorial and historical extension, of the application of the concept of feudalism comes from the pen of Soviet Marxists. According to them feudalism is

a class antagonistic formation; in world-historical development, the *stage following* the slaveholding system and *preceding* capitalism. In the history of many peoples, feudalism was the first class-antagonistic formation, directly succeeding the primitive communal system (Barg & Nikiforov, 1981; XXVII, 172; emphasis added).

This is the "clearest" and most "coherent" account of the march of social formations! For a contemporary debate on feudalism in "non-European" societies, see T. J. Byres and Harbans Mukhia (eds.), *Feudalism and Non-European Societies*.

16. Feudalism is explained as a system that "precedes" and "prepares" the conditions to the "gateway to capitalism." The *post festum* nature of the argument is quite obvious. What makes Wallachia different from England in relation to transition to capitalism if both were feudal because they are located in Europe? Anderson seems to "forget" that the development of capitalism in the "second serfdom" was not, after all, qualitatively different from the "Third World," or say, "Ireland," despite the "second serfdom" being "feudal" and, hence, "preceding" and "preparing" the conditions to the "gateway to capitalism." However, unlike its Western counterpart, the gate of the "second serfdom" did not open itself to capitalism by itself. Western capitalism had to knock at the door of the "second serfdom" and "force" it to "open up," just as China "opened up" to the "West" during the Opium War.

17. Dissenting from Anderson's Japan, Albert Soboul, perhaps the greatest proponent of the theory of bourgeois revolution in France, had this to say of Japan:

External forces alone would never have caused the modernization [sic!] of Japanese society, had its internal development not been moving in the same direction; in other words, the capitalist system of production in gestation within the feudal economy of Japan. The unique nature of the Meiji revolution derives particularly from this congruence between internal development and external pressures (1977: 165-66).

Alas, somewhere in the middle of the twenty-first century, Marxist scholars are debating how Brazil happens to be so "modernized," and they found the answer: in the twentieth century Brazil was moving "in the same direction" as, say France in the nineteenth century, such that "external" pressure alone would not have "enabled" Brazil to be such a "modern" society. The "internal" system in Brazil that made her so modern should have been feudalism! The same goes for Korea, Taiwan, and, why not, China. The anatomical imagery of capitalism

coming out of the “womb” of feudalism has created so much obsession with *origins* that whatever place that has achieved a high degree of “modernization” is taken to have had a feudal past; and, by the same token, whatever place happens to be much less “modern,” too much “traditional,” is taken to be due either to a lack of a feudal past, as in Anderson’s schema, or due to “survivals of traditional institutions,” as in mainstream modernization theory. Alas, if, after all, we are *comparing* degrees and kinds of development of “modernization” along the lines of state boundaries, why be so shy and quiet about the most advanced, “modernized” bourgeois civilization on the planet—the U.S.? Unfortunately, this super-modernized colossus has no feudal pedigree to count, no feudal genealogy to trace. It “modernized” itself out of itself, as in the transmutation of a caterpillar into a butterfly. That is why Marx and Engels *always* treated the U.S. apart from the rest of the bourgeois cosmos, as a star of a special kind. Their would-be followers suffocated the “specificities” of the U.S. under the heavy blanket of “bourgeois revolution”!

18. According to Stone:

Genuine genealogy was cultivated by the older gentry to reassure themselves of innate superiority over the upstarts; bogus genealogy was cultivated by the new gentry in an effort to clothe their social nakedness, and by the old gentry in the internal jockeying for position in the ancestral pecking order. A lengthy pedigree was a useful weapon in the Tudor battle for status (1972: 23).

Anderson’s obsession with genealogy and pedigree is not simply a residue of English aristocratic culture. The purpose of the genealogy, however, is the same as that of his aristocratic predecessors — as a useful weapon in his battle for the superiority of the status of Europe and “its overseas settlements” over the rest of the world.

19. Unlike Anderson’s ideology dressed up as history, Marx saw things quite differently:

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when there were as yet no colonies, when America did not yet exist *for Europe* [emphasis added], when Asia existed only through the intermediary of Constantinople, when the Mediterranean was the centre of commercial activity, the division of labour had a *very different form, a very different aspect* [emphasis added] from that of the seventeenth century, when the Spanish, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the English, and the French had colonies established in all parts of the world. The extent of the market, its physiognomy, give to the division of labour at different periods a physiognomy, a character, which it would be difficult to deduce from the single word *divide* [emphasis in the original], from the idea, from the category (1976: VI, 179–80).

Beautifully put! Now, replace Marx’s underlined word *divide*, with *Europe*, for what is “Europe” in Anderson’s grand project but an idea, a category.

Fourteenth and fifteenth centuries — are not these the centuries of Renaissance and “discovery of the New World,” centuries in which the “classical past” and the “feudal present” converge? And the seventeenth century? Well, is not this the period in which what is nowadays known as the capitalist world-economy was a few decades young? Marx said the two periods hardly have anything in common in terms of division of labor, which in Marx’s works is taken as the foundation of the property distribution and class differentiation save the idea, the category “divide.” For, “in principle, a porter differs less from a philosopher than a mastiff from a greyhound. It is the division of labour which has set a gulf between them” (Marx, 1976: VI, 180).

Anderson is Proudhon reincarnated; but this time he crossed the Channel northwards. When E. P. Thompson “defended” Great Britain from Althusser’s “locusts” in his *Poverty of Theory*, Anderson became Proudhon, the Proudhon devastatingly criticized by Marx in his *Poverty of Philosophy*. As he “joined” camp with Althusser against Thompson in his *Arguments*, defending a mode of *production* that knows no *exchange*, he joined camp with Proudhon against history. In both cases, history was attacked by the “poor” French, who thought the idea, the

category is history. Ironically though, Althusser and Anderson are self-declared Marxists, “unlike” Proudhon, that “composite error” (Marx, 1976: VI, 178).

20. In the paperback verso edition of his *Lineages*, a correct assessment of the book was made by the *Sunday Times*: “A dazzlingly provocative narrative of the two millenia between Pericles and Louis XIV” (emphasis added). From Books and Bookmen though, we read this: “A Marxist masterpiece, which should be in every single library in order ‘to end the night of our ignorance’ on the many themes which Anderson discusses.” The commenter forgot to add: a warning and lesson of how not to learn from its empiricist methodology, an excellent reference for discussing what logical inconsistency is all about.

21. Braudel:

Civilizations, like sand dunes, are firmly anchored to the hidden contours of the earth; grains of sand may come and go, blown into drifts or carried far away by the wind, but the dunes, the unmoving sum of innumerable movements, remain standing (1972: II, 757).

Anderson would concur, provided the dune is limited to Europe.

Civilizations are transformed only over very long periods of time, by imperceptible process, for all their apparent changeability. Light travels to them as it were from distant stars, relayed with sometimes unbelievable delays on the way: from China to the Mediterranean, from the Mediterranean to China, or from India and Persia to the inland sea.

Who knows how long it took for Indian numerals—the so-called Arabic numerals—to travel from their native land to the western Mediterranean through Syria and the outposts of the Arab world, North Africa or Spain? (Braudel, 1972: II, 773).

Braudel’s question is irrelevant in Anderson’s schema since the latter has *ideologically* separated Europe from the rest of human history, especially from the Mediterranean. After commenting that “there is something appealing about Braudel’s arrogance,” Christopher Hill said that although Braudel knows no “oriental” language, “he offers exciting new hypotheses which are not based on the *assumption* of European superiority” (1966: III, 131).

Since civilizations hardly die, and since Anderson prefers to go all the way back to Antiquity to discuss Victorian Great Britain, why not push the logic to its conclusion: go to the “Antiquity of Antiquity.” Trevor-Roper, by no means a sympathizer for the peoples of the “Middle East,” discussed in detail how “Eastern” Roman civilization was, how the “European” part was rural, backward, provincial, while the “Eastern” part was urban and civilized in the real sense of the term (1965: 46–50). It was the “East” that was the center of intellectual and scientific culture, both in Roman and Hellenistic times. Henri Pirenne talked about the “progressive orientalizing” of the “West (1939: 129).” He contrasted the Germanic “civilization” with the Mediterranean as one of “complete opposition” (1939: 141) and called Rome a “merely consumer city” (Pirenne, 1939: 18). Joseph Strayer said of the Roman Empire that it was not

wholly or even primarily European; it was based largely on the older civilizations of the Mediterranean basin . . . [that] even at the height of the [Roman] Empire, Alexandria was more important than Rome as an intellectual and artistic center, and Mediterranean trade was dominated by Syrians rather than by Italians . . . [that] the great contribution of the Romans was the creation of a political organization which gave unity and peace to the Mediterranean basin for over two centuries (1974: 13).

Strayer also noted that, unlike Greco-Roman civilization which was “Mediterranean not European,” “modern occidental civilization is oceanic, not European; it is as typical of America, Australia, and parts of Asia and Africa as it is of Western Europe” (1974: 4). The latter, of course, is referring to the capitalist world-system.

It is simply ironical how non-Marxist, and in the case of Trevor-Roper anti-Marxist, scholars are more inclined to historical objectivity than a Perry Anderson who is considered to be one of the voices of the highly sophisticated, democratic, Western Marxism!

If Antiquity is so relevant to the history of the modern world in the Antiquity-Feudalism-Capitalism trinity, if Antiquity leaves its “civilizational imprint on its successors,” then start from Mesopotamia and Egypt. Well, of course, this will be too “messy,” “unmanageable,” and above all, creates “intractable problems for the unitary history of Europe.” Hence the need for ideology to replace history. The *core* of Anderson’s grand error lies in his identification of a *mode of production*, capitalism, with *civilization*. He wants to have his cake, and eat it too.

22. Anderson’s obsession with the specificity of Europe continued in his other work, *Considerations of Western Marxism*. Here, Europe, which was treated as one in his *Lineages* becomes divided into two: the advanced, democratic, civil-societal West; and the backward, dictatorial, statal East. Since he cannot argue without citing the authority of an antecedent, as if to avoid the curse of the dead, he found *the* patriarch on the “specificity of the West” in Marxist theory in the person of the Sardinian – Antonio Gramsci. *Pace* Gramsci we have Western Marxism, different from “Eastern Marxism” as the “West” is different from the “East.” In feudalism Europe is one; in Marxism it becomes two. From which side did Marxism itself come into being?

23. Anderson’s grand historical project is based on a *trilogy of transitions*: passages from Antiquity to Feudalism, passages from Feudalism to Capitalism; and passages from Capitalism to Socialism. On the first passage, he has his *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism*. On the second passage, he has his *Lineages of the Absolutist State*. On the third passage, a work is not written yet, but glimpses of it are around. The trilogy of transitions is based on the *trilogy of syntheses*. Each passage took place through a synthesis of two historical formations. In the first case, it was a synthesis of Germanic “tribal” communism with Roman civilization. Result = feudalism. In the second case, the synthesis was between Feudalism and Antiquity. Result = capitalism. That, in the second case, Antiquity is already contained within Feudalism itself so that the synthesis of Antiquity with Feudalism is a historical duplicity seems to escape Anderson’s notice. In the third case, will it be a synthesis of Western democracy and the two earlier syntheses as sedimentary foundations?

In these three historical trilogies and syntheses we have the “specificity of Europe” secure on firm grounds, since no other place on the planet could boast of a similar trajectory. Sadly enough, in each case, the eastern part of Europe defies inclusion in the trilogies. Eastern Europe is demiurge of Anderson’s project.

24. Anderson:

The rule of the Absolutist State was that of the feudal nobility in the epoch of transition to capitalism. Its end would signal the crisis of the power of its class: the advent of the bourgeois revolutions, and the emergence of the capitalist State (1979: 42).

25. This “it all depends on what you mean” argument is eloquently made, among others, by Christopher Hill in relation to the concept of bourgeois revolution. See his “A Bourgeois Revolution?” (Hill, 1986a: III, 95).

26. Doyle:

The [French] Revolution took three years to become republican, and France was only to be a republic for 16 out of the 81 years between 1789 and 1870. . . . Not even *absolute* monarchy disappeared for good in 1789. The authority of the Emperor Napoleon was far wider in fact than anything the Bourbon kings had enjoyed; and his nephew, Napoleon III, was little constrained by constitutional limitations. Even the parliamentary monarchy of the Restoration had powers that would have shocked the constitution-makers of 1789. This is what Tocqueville meant when he argued that the historic function of the Revolution was to remove the remaining obstacles in the way of despotism (1980: 47).

27. The uniqueness Marx and Engels repeatedly attributed to America is best expressed in the Introduction to the *Grundrisse* by Marx. This uniqueness lies in the fact that it was only in the U.S. that the concept "abstract labor" is "true in practice." Marx wrote:

Indifference towards specific labours corresponds to a form of society in which individuals can with ease transfer from one labour to another, and where the specific kind is a matter of chance for them, hence of indifference. . . . In the U.S. then, for the first time, the point of departure of modern economics, namely the abstraction of the category "labour", "labour as such", labour pure and simple, becomes true in practice. . . . One could say that this indifference towards particular kinds of labour, which is a historic product in the United States, appears e.g., among the Russians as a spontaneous inclination. But there is a devil of a difference between barbarians who are fit by nature to be used for anything [?!] and civilized people who apply themselves to everything. And then in practice the Russian indifference to the specific character of labour corresponds to being embedded by tradition within a specific kind of labour, from which only external influences can jar them loose (1973: 104-05).

Hence, only in the U.S., where the *concept* of abstract labor is also the *reality*, only in the U.S., where the gap between theory and practice is closed by abstract labor itself becoming directly *historical abstract labor*, only here can the bourgeoisie rule undivided. And yet, nowhere does the theory of a "bourgeois revolution" directed against feudalism and Absolutism apply as remotely as in the U.S. As to Marx's "hatred" for Russians, the irony of history turned things topsy-turvy: in just sixty years after these lines of Marx were written, the Russians made a revolution under the banner of the red flag of Karl Marx. They had come a long way in a short time!

28. "Aristocrats were a majority in almost all British Cabinets before 1895. After 1895 they never were" (Hobsbawm, 1987: 171).

"The temptation of bourgeoisie to the nobility and its way of life," as Zagorin called it, was what Braudel called the "treason of the bourgeoisie." What the ". . . aspiring urban elites and bourgeoisie wanted most as a rule was to be received into the noble order" (Zagorin, 1982: 71). And this was as far back as the seventeenth century. See also Eric Hobsbawm's *The Age of Empire* for the same aristocratic bias of the nineteenth-century British big bourgeoisie (1987: 176).

29. Stone commented that in a "society that was even more obsessed with status than with money" (1965: 223), the preference for aristocratic lifestyle by the bourgeois is quite understandable. Brenner made the observation that

English development had distinguished itself from that in most places on the Continent in two critical, interrelated aspects. It was marked by the rise of a *capitalist aristocracy* which was presiding over an *agricultural revolution* (1985: 299).

See also R. H. Tawney, *The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century* (1961: 195); Trevor Aston (ed.), *Crisis in Europe 1560-1660* (1965).

30. Immanuel Wallerstein seems to make the same point when he wrote:

There was a real difference between 1660 and 1640 [England], but I believe, contrary to most arguments, that it was the *social* difference and not the *political* difference that mattered. The open social warfare came to an end. The bourgeoisie as a social *class* gained its *droit de cité*, but the leading positions in this class were in fact securely in the hands of the old families. The basis of the social compromise was the working out of a policy of economic nationalism that could serve former Cavaliers and roundheads alike . . . (1980: II, 121-22).

31. Referring to the great compromise of late seventeenth-century England, Wallerstein commented: "How bitter for the peasants and the urban workers must have been the great

compromises. . . . It was at this time that the two concepts *working classes* and *dangerous classes* began to be linked . . .” (1980: II, 125).

32. A puzzled observer asked about the whole idea of “betrayal” by the “national bourgeoisie”:

The idea of “betrayal” is even more curious when looked at from the angle of the bourgeoisie.

Why should a national bourgeoisie “betray” its historic role? Presumably, it has everything to gain from performing this role. And since everyone—conservatives, liberals, Marxists—agrees that bourgeois capitalists always pursue their own interests, how is it that in this instance they appear not to have seen their own interests? It seems more than a conundrum; it seems to be a self-contradicting assertion. The strangeness of the very idea is accentuated by the fact that quantitatively the number of national bourgeoisies that are said to have “betrayed” their historic roles turns out not to be small but very large—indeed, the vast majority (Wallerstein, 1988: 95).

“Why should the national bourgeoisie ‘betray’ its historic role?” Simple: because it has more to gain in its alliance with the “feudal” lords, its “natural” enemy, than it loses. Why? Because a common enemy of both classes, “feudal” lords and bourgeoisie, an enemy that wants to bury both classes, is already on the historical scene. The name of this enemy—the Proletariat. If the “bourgeois revolution” led by the bourgeoisie *replaces* “feudal” property with “all muck of commercial entanglements” with absolute private property, the proletariat wants to abolish *all property* such that its “mission” can be “summed up in one stance: Abolition of private property” (*Manifesto*), absolute or otherwise. Hence, obviously the bourgeois cannot help preferring the “feudal” lords, and in the case of the “Third World,” imperialism too, to the proletariat. But has not the proletariat always existed with the bourgeoisie; does not the latter imply, both logically and historically, the former? If this is so, is it not obvious that the bourgeoisie is bound to “betray” its “historical mission”? Of course, provided one does not believe in what has perhaps been the greatest “illusion of the epoch” of bourgeois civilization—the theory of “bourgeois revolution.” The Marxist theory of the betrayal of the bourgeoisie was later to be supplemented by the Marxist theory of the betrayal of Marxists. In the first case, the Marxists were condemning the bourgeoisie for “betraying” its own class interests; in the second case, Marxists were condemning other Marxists for betraying the proletarian revolution. Hence one of the most famous Marxist works had as its title *The Revolution Betrayed!* Understandably enough the best biographer of Trotsky entitled his trilogy with the words, “prophet” as a prefix. The “prophet” was armed first, then unarmed, and at last outcast!

33. Wallerstein:

The basic problem resides in our imagery about how capitalism works. Because capitalism requires the free flow of the factors of production—of labour, capital, and commodities—we assume that it requires, or at least that capitalists desire, a *completely* free flow, whereas in fact it requires and capitalists desire a *partially* free flow (1988: 100).

Lenin made the same comment:

It should be added that our literature frequently contains too stereotyped an understanding of the theoretical proposition that capitalism requires the free, landless worker. This proposition is quite correct as indicating the main trend, but capitalism penetrates into agriculture particularly slowly and in extremely varied forms. The allotment of land to the rural worker is very often to the interests of the rural employers themselves, and that is why the allotment-holding rural worker is a type to be found in all capitalist countries. The type assumes different forms in different countries: the English cottager is not the same as the small-holding peasant of France or the Rhine provinces, and the latter again is not the same as the Knecht in Prus-

sia. Each of these bears traces of a specific agrarian system, of a specific history of agrarian relations—but this does not prevent the economist from classifying them all as one type of agricultural proletarian. The juridical basis of his right to his plot of land is absolutely immaterial to such a classification (1977: 181).

When labor is free everywhere, we have socialism, said Wallerstein, meaning, of course, *not* that free labor *is* socialism, but that *by the time labor is free everywhere*, capitalism would have run its course.

34. Wallerstein made the same remark as Engels. After quoting Tawney's statement: "Bourgeois revolution? Of course it was a bourgeois revolution. The trouble is the bourgeoisie was on both sides" [of revolution and "counter-revolution"]. Wallerstein commented:

But this was true of the Glorious Revolution of 1688–1689 as it was of the revolution of 1640; and it was true of the Fronde as well, and even of the French Revolution of 1789. This takes away none of their "revolutionary" character. It means we must do away with the ahistorical idea that the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy were two radically different groups, particularly in this period of time. They were two heavily overlapping social groups that took on somewhat different contours depending on whether one defined the dominant stratum in terms of social status or in terms of social class. It made a lot of difference which definition was used. The social and political struggles were real, but they were *internal* to the ruling strata (1980: II, 120).

The "ruling strata" was a ruling *class* divided within "itself" into *status* and political *party* distinctions.

R. H. Tawney made similar arguments about the class identity of the landed aristocracy:

The social categories used to distinguish the landed and trading classes, which in France and Germany remained terms with a legal significance, lost in England any claim to precision which they once have possessed. The landowner living on the profits of rents of commercial farming, and the merchant or banker who was also a landowner represented, not two classes, but one. . . . Judged by the source of their incomes, they were equally *bourgeois* (1941: 18).

35. If one does not agree with Stone because he is not a Marxist historian, then one should see this remark by Robert Brenner:

By 1640, the English landlords *as a whole*, led by the aristocracy, presided over and benefitted from the three-tiered system of social relations which has been classically identified with capitalist agriculture . . ." (1978: 133; emphasis added).

Brenner refers to Stone's *The Crisis of the Aristocracy* (1965) for corroboration of his above quoted statement.

36. Wallerstein put it bluntly:

Capitalists do not want competition, but monopoly. They seek to accumulate capital not via profit but via rent. They want not to be bourgeois but to be aristocrats. And since historically—that is, from the sixteenth century to the present—we have had a deepening and a widening of the capitalist logic in the capitalist world-economy, there is more not less monopoly, there is more rent and less profit, there is more aristocracy and less bourgeoisie (1988: 103).

So we have Donald Trump. He extracts rent, as opposed to profit, runs casinos, as opposed to the Endicott-Johnson shoe factories, and prefers to be an aristocrat to being a bourgeois. The most recent aristocratic addition to Trump's coterie: a yacht, whom he said is "Queen of the Ocean," and not president of the ocean, and whom he baptized, since he bought it from a "Moslem," as the "Trump Princess." Pointing to F.D.R., he said,

Look over there. What's happening is huge traffic jams. . . . It never happened before. All these cars are stopped here to look at the boat, because it's a masterpiece. It's beyond a ship or a boat or a yacht. That is what I love (*Newsweek*, July 18, 1988, p. 62).

The poor multitude of New York stood still to see the Princess, to pay their respects for the aristocrat's latest collection. Well, who knows "aristocratic" taste of a bourgeois more than the bourgeois himself. His "income," rent, as opposed to profit, is, of course, a division of the surplus-value. The difference between the aristocrat and the bourgeois in the modern world is a difference between rent and profit respectively, both of which are simply distributional forms of surplus-value under capitalism. Those who read feudalism in the modern aristocracy might as well read feudal serfdom in Apartheid.

37. "To the great despair of historians, men [and women] fail to change their vocabulary every time they change their customs," wrote the historian-as-practitioner, Marc Bloch in *The Historian's Craft* (1964: 34). "A besetting problem for historians is the survival of names describing things which have totally changed their nature," added C. Hill (1986d: II, 51). The term "aristocracy" is one such "besetting problem."

38. In a footnote, Stone remarked:

I am preparing a detailed study of the sociological correlations of the landed elite with their political affiliations in the [English] Civil War, which will offer some positive findings to offset the purely negative conclusions of this article (1985: 53).

39. Perhaps one of the best Marxist analyses of the different "paths" to agrarian capitalism in Europe is made by Robert Brenner. In his "Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe" (1985), Brenner made a class-struggle "determinist" analysis of capitalist development in which the struggle between feudal lords and peasants led to the demise of serfdom in western Europe, which in turn led to two different "paths" of capitalist development. In England, the free peasants lost out to big landlords who became bourgeois landlords; in France, the free peasants "won" over the aspiring bourgeois landlords. England became landlord-bourgeois; France remained peasant petty mode of production. In eastern Europe, peasants lost the war against lords; hence the "second serfdom." In the West, serfdom died out; in the East it was reinforced with a vengeance. In the West, "peasants" moved from serfdom to freedom; in the East, "peasants" moved from (communal) freedom to serfdom. Anyway, the outcome of peasant freedom in England and France was "a very different sort of class structure in the French countryside from that which had emerged in England" (Brenner, 1985: 57). In England, "real" "economic development" took place, thanks to the landlord-bourgeois; in France, peasant agriculture "set up yet another vicious cycle of backwardness thwarting agricultural capitalism" (Brenner, 1985: 57).

40. The Genoveses devoted a book celebrating the parasitism of "merchant capital." See *The Fruits of Merchant Capital*.

41. The idea of the proletariat leading bourgeois revolution *against* the bourgeoisie but *for* the fastest possible development of capitalism may sound utterly absurd. And yet, it was a major theoretical position of the Bolsheviks and Trotsky up until 1917. This thesis is based on the assumption that the bourgeoisie has a "historical mission" to fulfill, that this "historical mission" was carried out by the English and French bourgeoisie, but that the Russian bourgeoisie, seeing more to lose from the collapse of Tsarism than to gain, and threatened by the independent actions of the proletariat, "betrayed" its historical mission of carrying out the Russian "bourgeois revolution." Hence, this historical task of "bourgeois revolution" has to be carried out by the proletariat. As such, the proletariat is "condemned to be free" twice: the first time, by carrying out the Cross of a revolution that is not its revolution, by acting as the "savior" of the bourgeoisie from itself; and the second time, by carrying out its "historical mission" of the socialist revolution. If the "bourgeois revolutions" led by the bourgeoisie laid down the material conditions for the liberation of the proletariat, the bourgeois revolu-

tions led by the proletariat lay down the social, political, and economic conditions for the liberation of the bourgeoisie. This is dialectics!

42. Of course, there is bureaucracy and bureaucracy. The bureaucracy of Pharaonic Egypt was quite different from that of Hitlerite Germany or Stalinist U.S.S.R. But within capitalist social relations, state bureaucracies have similar "functions": they provide the political conditions for the extended reproduction of capital accumulation.

43. Schumpeter, in a footnote referring to the eulogy of the bourgeoisie in the *Communist Manifesto*, commented:

Observe that all the achievements referred to [the bourgeoisie in the *Manifesto*] are attributed to the bourgeoisie alone which is more than many thoroughly bourgeois economists would claim (1950: 7).

44. Marx wrote:

In practical life, we find not only competition, monopoly and the antagonism between them, but also the synthesis of the two, which is not a formula, but a movement. Monopolists compete, among themselves; competitors become monopolists. If the monopolists restrict their mutual competition by means of partial associations, competition increases among the workers; and the more the mass of the proletarians grows as against the monopolists of one nation, the more desperate competition becomes between the monopolists of different nations. The synthesis is such that monopoly can only maintain itself by continually entering into the struggle of competition (1976: VI, 195-96).

So, after all, competition and monopoly are not *stages*, one replacing another, one progressive the other not, but rather mutually existing syntheses.

45. Elsewhere, he called the concept of a transitional stage, "A blurry non-concept with no operational indicators" (Wallerstein, 1979: 15). M. I. Finley concurs. See his *The Ancient Economy* (1985: 180). Moreover, Wallerstein noted that:

To analyze the period from 1450 to 1750 as one long "transition" from feudalism to capitalism risks reifying the concept of transition, for we thus steadily reduce the periods of "pure" feudalism and "pure" capitalism and sooner or later arrive at zero, being left with nothing but transition" (1980: II, 31).

46. The historical "restorations" of monarchical power after the "bourgeois revolutions" is the Achilles' heel of the theory of "bourgeois revolution." As such, the proponents of the theory of "bourgeois revolution" are rather quiet when it comes to the question of "restoration." One voice, however, is heard loud on the question of the "restorations."

The social and economic gains of a bourgeois revolution are more stable than the political gains. A bourgeois revolution has often been followed by the restoration of the overthrown dynasty, but the capitalist system that asserted itself in the course of the revolution has triumphed (for example, the English Revolution of the 17th century and the French Revolution of the late 18th century) (Barg & Nikiforov, 1974: IV, 45).

That the capitalist system "asserted itself" after the revolution we concur. But in spite of the revolution. For capitalist relations existed prior to the "bourgeois revolutions" and afterwards. The "bourgeois revolutions" are superfluous for the development of capitalism. How else can one explain the "restoration" of the monarchies which were supposed to be the "instruments" of feudal rule which thereby necessitated their overthrowal in a "bourgeois revolution" in the first place? As the second edition of the "non-correspondence" between the capitalist economic base with the feudal political superstructure?

47. Perez Zagorin, "unable" to understand how governments make revolution, i.e., the so-called "revolution from above," which seems to have been used first by Engels in relation to Bismarck, remarked

[The idea of “revolution from above”] extends the prestige of the revolutionary metaphor to governments, hailing their sponsorship of modernizing change as “revolutionary.” This entails, though, an oddly distorted perspective. For if such change is achieved more or less peacefully through consensus and the adaptive devices of the political system, then it is *reform*; whereas if it is imposed upon a resistant people by the massive application of coercion, it is still change promoted by power holders and incumbents. The latter kind of change, however, is often associated with authoritarian or even despotic regimes. . . . Only the pervasive influence of the revolutionary myth could ever have induced modern historians to speak as though even governments make revolution (1982: I, 89).

As Bismarck made his “revolution from above” through iron and blood policy, so also Stalin declared war on the peasantry in 1929, using the same theme: “revolution from above”! Hence, Stalin became the Bismarck of the proletariat!

48. Robert Ashton wrote: “In their study of the members of the Long Parliament, Messrs. Brunton and Pennington found little difference between the landed economies of those who fought on either side in the Civil War” (1978: 79). See also L. Stone, *The Causes of the English Revolution* (1972: 55). H. R. Trevor-Roper made the same point; see his *The European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries and Other Essays* (1969: 54).

49. Paul Hirst, who sees a Weberian project in Anderson’s grand corpus, made a number of keen, critical observations, some of which are worth quoting. Referring to Anderson’s obsession with the “uniqueness of the West,” the same as Weber’s theory of rationality being unique to the West, Hirst wrote:

Uniqueness must be conceived as an end and the end ascribed to an origin. This teleology is inherent in the problem of uniqueness. Noting uniqueness as a *problem* presupposes the explanation of the uniqueness in the origin, it is a question of the problematic of the origin. The answer is prior to the question, necessary for it to be posed. “The Uniqueness of the West — Perry Anderson’s Analysis of Absolutism and its Problems” (1985: 95).

Given the refusal of a philosophy of history, Anderson is condemned to the comparative method — uniqueness is attributed to the West by reason of the absence of similar characteristics of potentialities in other regions. The uniqueness of the West therefore becomes the uniqueness of a narrative — the necessity of the unique is founded on the singularity of its genealogy. Because he refuses teleological *explanation*, Anderson must found uniqueness on the singularity of an *event*, an origin no other evolution can share (1985: 96–97).

The fact that capitalism developed in Western Europe between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries proves nothing about its potentialities for autonomous development elsewhere. The “West” is not a unique origin point but simply the site of the first and successful conjuncture of transition to capitalism. The effects of this transition have been to destroy the possibility of “autonomous” transitions. Western capitalism is dominant in the process of transition to capitalism, it subordinates and overcomes other modes of production through the development of the world market and imperialism (1985: 98–99).

Japanese or Russian feudal forms may or may not have generated the conditions necessary for a transitional conjuncture (given, that is, the conditions for an autonomous development). There is no way of knowing since the existence of a successful transitional conjuncture has closed all such possibilities of development. This closure does not justify the notion that the West is “unique.” *There is no essential historical process* — whether it be the necessary evolutionary progress of all social forms through a succession of “stages,” or, the unique and unrepeatable confinement of a develop-

ment to a distinct origin. The question of uniqueness answers itself once we have shed the essentialist problem of the origin, these countries in Western Europe happen to be dominant in the first and successful transition to capitalism.

To ask the question, why is it that capitalism develops first in the West?, is to pose a question not asked by Anderson (1985: 99).

Anderson finds it inconceivable that feudal social relations might exhibit a similar constancy. *The reason for attacking the Orthodox conception of feudalism is that it denies the uniqueness of the West. Anderson is led into arguing for the superstructural determination of pre-capitalist modes of production to save his own problem as a Marxist problem* (1985: 113).

50. The latest addition of Anderson to his theme of the uniqueness of the "West" and the bourgeois revolution is his article "The Figures of Descent," in *New Left Review* (1987). In this article he tackles the question of the decline of Great Britain as a major global power and makes the "non-productive" parasitism of London responsible for this decline. See Michael Barratt-Brown's excellent critique of Anderson's "The Figures of Descent" in his article, "Away With All the Great Arches," in *New Left Review* (1987). See also Alex Callinicos' "Exception or Symptom? The British Crisis and the World System," in *New Left Review* (1988).

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